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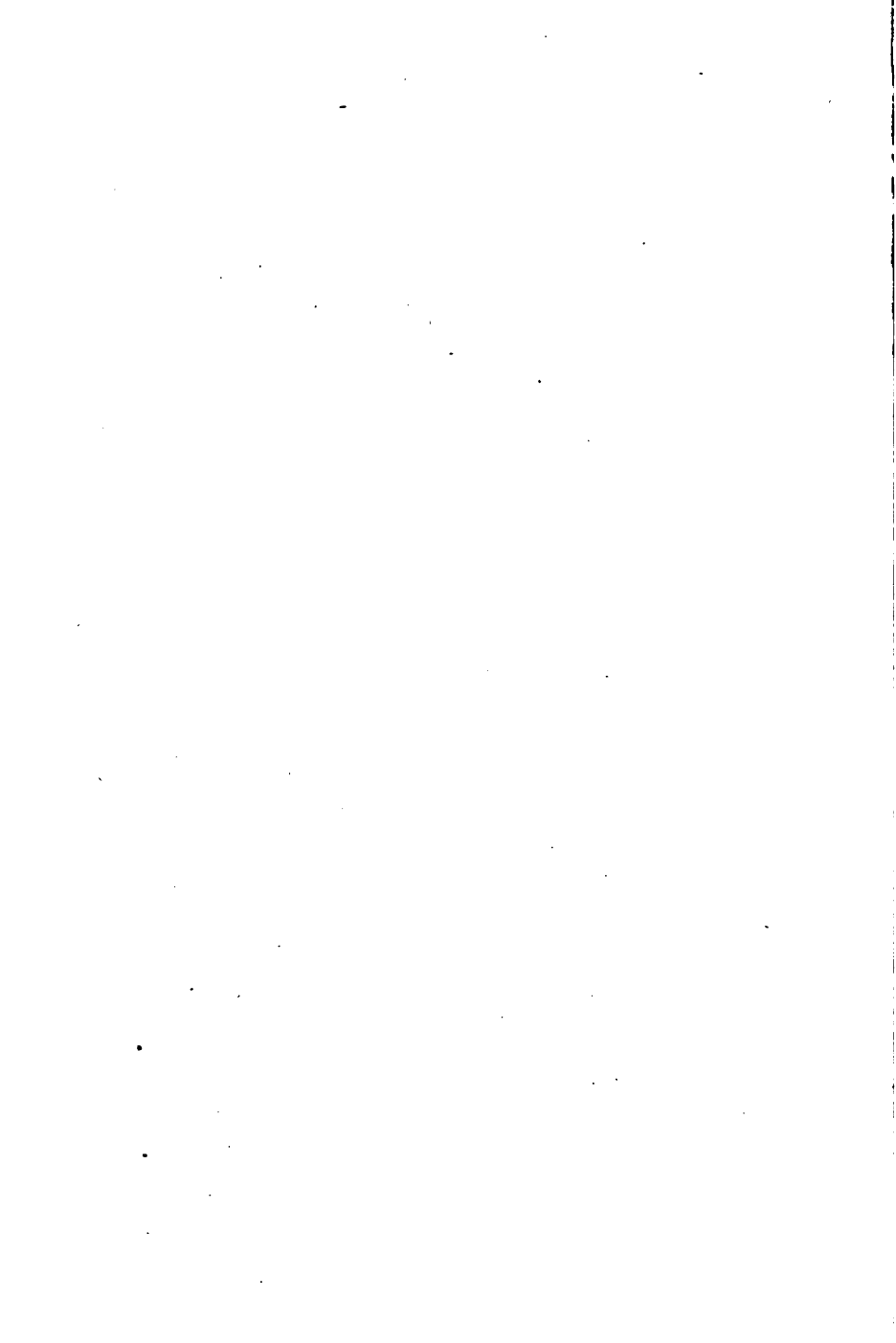
GRAPHICS

HARRIS·MERTON·LYON

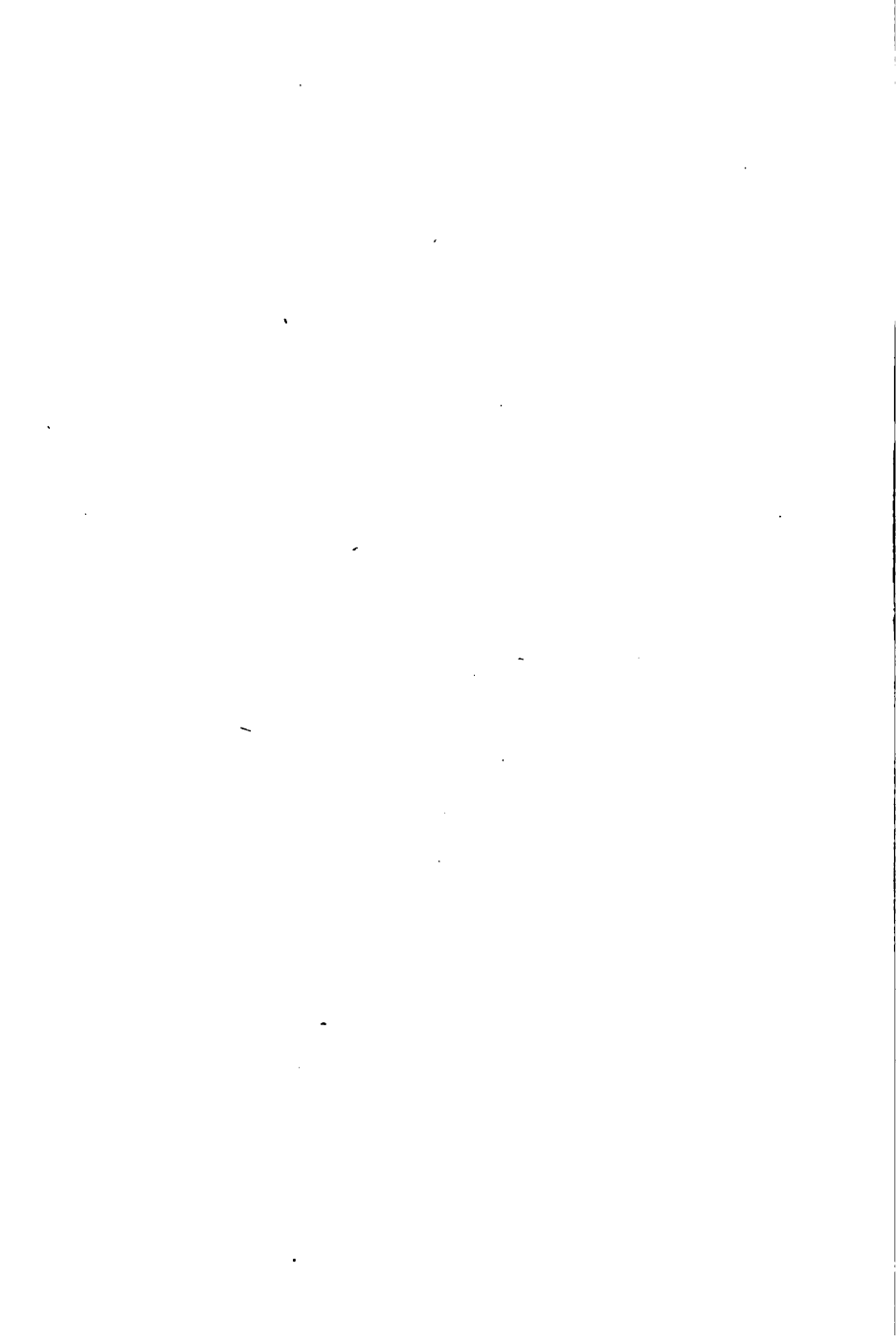


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Lyon



TO
JOSEPH CONRAD



GRAPHICS

By

HARRIS MERTON LYON

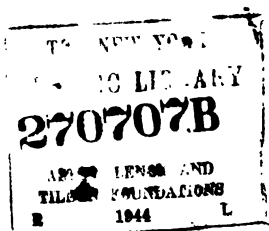
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WILLIAM MARION REEDY

ST. LOUIS

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GRAPHICS



CONTENTS

	PAGE
SWEETNESS AND THE DARK	3
LILLIE	18
THE RAVEN	36
THE POET	60
JOSEPHSON	73
A SISTER OF SHALOTT	90
THE WIND IN THE LILACS	110
THE RACE-RIOTER	126
REVENGE	153
\$448.00	183
THE 2000TH CHRISTMAS	209
DUX FEMINA FACTI	236
THE LITTLE TIN GODS	258
ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN	283
A BOOK IN A RUNNING BROOK	297



GRAPHICS

SWEETNESS—AND THE DARK

It ~~seems~~ to me that in the candy trade we have an extraordinarily compact epitome of life as it is lived to-day; and especially I refer to the chocolate bon-bon trade. We who are on top and have the money to buy, buy.

What do we buy?

Why—chocolate bon-bons, of course.

The chocolate bon-bon! Symbol of youth, joy of the young maid's heart, love-offering of the gallant swain. How at this joyous Christmas time a saccharine sentiment pervades all our good, honest hearts, God bless us! How we who have the money do love to buy and present the sweet gifts! In my mind's eye I see us millions of properly-clothed, healthy, cheery people walking out on Christmas morning, in the crisp air, about our errands from one friend's house to another; hearty laughter on the doorstep; decent exclamations of gladness and surprise within, as we look at the youngsters' Christmas tree, at the young lady's presents. A chatter of pleasant talk for a few minutes and then, perhaps, we pull from our own overcoat pockets the things we have brought, a few trinkets for the father and

mother, and a box of bon-bons for the young lady. She breaks it open, with tiny shrieks of glee, and munches.

What does she munch?

Why, choc——

Wait a minute. That is not the only thing that's sweet.

There is something else that is just as sweet as sugar-candy.

Life.

Luella was only one of a family of nine. The family, like so many other families nowadays, was "not much good." By this was meant that the family had never had anything and never would have anything. Of course not. Why should it? Mentally, the family was endowed with that superficial gift known as "reading;" it belonged in that proud American generation which was boasted of as "the first generation in the world that could read." Not being fitted with any powers which would enable it to comprehend as it read, it contented itself with reading trash, because trash was "easiest." Physically, Luella's family was in fair shape. That is, the nine systems stood up pretty well under the adulterated food which various Interests were allowed to feed them; under the adulterated cotton clothing which various Inter-

ests were allowed to force upon their backs; under the adulterated shoes which various Interests were allowed to force upon their feet. And so on.

Because Luella's father and mother had been lucky enough to be young and healthy, Luella herself, now at the age of sixteen, had a fairly sound body. (Later, as she lay dying in the hospital, one of the Interests tried to prove that her whole family had been tubercular; the Interest failed in this, but it did manage to have a staff physician discharged. What for? For the very thing I am doing now). One day it became necessary for Luella to quit helping her mother run the house and seek regular employment of some sort. This was necessary because Luella's only sister no longer contributed her share of the cash to keep up the family. (Luella's sister was eighteen and represented the family's only attempt at "higher" education. It was, of course, a disastrous attempt. By studying stenography, Edith had managed to insert herself into a new world where bewildering powers ranged and menaced. Her employer was a superior person with thousands of dollars. Secure in his position, he seduced her; discharged her. When she returned he had her thrown out and threatened with arrest for "creating a disturbance" and for "being a nuisance." So, being a girl who came

of a family that was "not much good," she did indeed become a nuisance. A public nuisance. Edith went on the town, and never home again).

"What do you think of my trying this?" Luella read from the "*Help Wanted—Female*": "One hundred girls as chocolate dippers. Steady wages. Ellamo's, 10th and Jackson."

Luella's mother was crying abjectly with her arms about her husband's neck. Luella's father had been drinking a little and seemed more moody than ever. If there had only been a little more brains in the whole family; and if any of them had shown any spirit; and if they had simply set about it to get justice, to demand their rights! Yes. It is very disgusting, such obtuseness. No wonder such people do not get ahead. God puts an elemental *something* into those of us who are superior; we act by divine right. The under-dog is born with an ineradicable under-dog germ . . . Was it Christ or Nietzsche said that?

"Steady wages," continued Luella, hopefully.

Finally, in a blind and tragic revolt, her father managed to become vocal. It seems incredible, but there was a sort of ruthless genius in the stupid fellow's remark: "Yes—'steady wages.' Hah! Steady as long as you last."

However, money is money. God bless us all

yes! Money is money. So Luella got a job at Ellamo's.

It was not especially enjoyable to work in a candy factory: it was not nearly as enjoyable as the candy itself. To start with, you cannot dip chocolates successfully in a room where the windows are open; for open windows let in dust. There are ways, however, to have pure air besides the air of outdoors. Ellamo's, unfortunately, could see none of these ways. The air in Ellamo's did not circulate. It was fastened into the chocolate-dipping room from the very first day on which Ellamo's moved in. To have obtained pure air would have necessitated remodelling the building.

More than the lifeless air, Luella noticed the steady cold, or rather chilliness, of the chocolate-dipping room. This chilliness is a peculiar chilliness necessary to the proper hardening of the dipped chocolate. And it has peculiar results. It is not as damp a chilliness as the chilliness of a prison, but it has just about the same thorough effect upon the breathing apparatus of a human being. This chilliness and the kept air gradually possessed themselves of Luella.

In a quite mysterious fashion Luella felt "a severe cold" growing in her chest. Sometimes

this "cold" was quite painful. A sort of dullness, a lack of animation pervaded her. It is quite probable that there were all sorts of contributing causes to this cold; nothing is so detestable as a narrow-minded view of things. Probably Luella's cold would not have been so bad if she could have worn flannel. But real flannel costs so much. Or if there had not been paper soles in her shoes. But genuine leather costs so much. Or if the milk she drank had not been adulterated. But pure milk costs so much. Or if the air she breathed could have been fresh air. But, in the name of common sense, how can you have fresh air when real estate costs so much?

As she felt herself growing stupider, Luella redoubled her energies. There is nothing so eager as a poor person, one of the people who are "not much good," when he feels himself falling behind in his ability to earn a living. But, after a period of this enforced action, Luella really had to lay off a day or two. "Go see a doctor," said her father.

"Where?"

"At the hospital, o' course."

The first day she idled around home, too tired to go to the hospital. The second day she went "to see what was the matter with her." The examining physician asked her that very question.

"I got a heavy cold."

"What do you do for a living?"

"I'm a chocolate-dipper."

The examining physician made an unintelligible noise in his nose. "Do you expectorate?"

"Sir?"

"Spit much?"

"A little."

"Take this box home with you. The next time you expectorate, use this box. Then bring it back here."

Luella worked another day, explained to the forelady she "really had an awful feeling in her chest," and laid off the next day to pay a visit to the hospital with the box. Three or four days of idleness at home. Another visit.

"One of your lungs is slightly affected," was the careful verdict of the physician. (As a matter of fact, the Board of Health laboratory, to which the specimen had been sent, reported a positive case of tuberculosis).

"What'll I do?" asked Luella, pathetically. She crooked an arm and barely touched her offending chest with her hand. Those modern painters who waste their paint on the Virgin might have found here a pose that carried a spiritual poignancy as deep as any in all the personages of the Christian procession. "What *will* I do?"—the eternal cry of those who are "not

much good," dumbly facing the great blank horror.

The physician inquired more into her home life. Then he grunted, reached for his pen and a pad of paper. "You'd better rest here a while until you get better."

That was one of the big, central, public hospitals. They kept people such as Luella only so long as they were able to wait on themselves. Then, the piling up of more Luellas, forced the older inmates out . . . into other hospitals.

Said the house-physician, in effect: "The air here doesn't seem to agree with you. We can send you to another hospital, up where there is a higher altitude."

Luella was shoved on.

It requires money to operate hospitals; and, of course, we all know—God bless us,—how hard it is to get money. But, somehow, the sick people seem to multiply easily, without any difficulty. Under our modern methods of living, quite too many people seem to get sick with astonishing rapidity. And the worst of it all is, that most of these people haven't the money to pay their way through a hospital. You will never get the managers of a hospital to tell you this, but really it is a pretty hard struggle for most hospitals to make both ends meet. They are compelled to cut down all sorts of expenses:

food supplies, medicine supplies, staff of nurses, even ice for the morgue. Many a death in a hospital has occurred because one nurse was trying to do the work of three.

Luella, unknown to herself, was for a while, a paying patient. Ellamo's made it a point to "try to help out" their chocolate-dippers. This, of course, was not business. God bless us, no! It was all due to an un stomachable feeling which occasionally assailed Mr. Howard Ellamo, senior partner, in the pit of his excellent stomach. The thought that he *ought* to do something for his discarded chocolate-dippers used to afflict him suddenly with a nausea like that we feel when the life is running rapidly out of us. But such feelings and the charity consequent upon them cannot endure long. After all, everything comes into your balance sheet. The thousand and one outlays necessary in conducting a successful business—consider the one item of advertising alone—foot up tremendously. You have to prune off your luxuries and pay strict attention to business, or you are lost.

Luella was a luxury.

"The altitude here is entirely too high for you," said the house physician. "We can arrange to have you transferred back onto Manhattan Island. Much better for you there than here."

She progressed, descended, through two more

hospitals, a patient of the city. At last she came to a full stop in Segmore, a year and a half after she had taken home the little box.

At Segmore, the examining physician noted her "clubbed" fingernails—sure sign of the consumptive—made her strip to the waist; swathed her chest with a linen band to keep him free of any skin disease while he auscultated; then he used the stethoscope.

"Where do you live? Where did you work?"

"I was a chocolate-dipper about—"

He waved his hand and went on with the examination, calling out some meaningless words about "apex" to another severe man who sat writing at a desk. Luella's temperature was high; she was sent straight to bed in the charity ward.

Here, for the first time in her hospital career, she was happy. Of course she was happy. For she found in the charity ward eight other chocolate-dippers, seven of whom had worked at Ellamo's.

It was approaching Christmas time. Even in that long, white room, with its enamel, its linen, its whitewashed walls—all as pale as a ghost would be pale—some little trickle of human merriment and cheer ran from bed to bed . . . moribundity grasping at a novel bit of life. Luella, because of her fever, was strapped into

her bed. But others of the chocolate-dippers were allowed to move about and visit. They all expressed the opinion that by the next Christmas they would be "out."

It is regrettable to relate, Mr. Howard Ellamo was dying. He was dying in his beautiful home on Riverside Drive. It is, perhaps, noteworthy to relate that he was dying of Bright's Disease. Suddenly, one day, he had an idea he would be well again by Christmas; and this idea aroused in him another. He called his secretary and feebly dictated a note to his junior partner, a man by the name of Steiner. The note was to the effect that all the Ellamo girls "who could be located" were to have a two-pound box of candy as a Christmas gift from the firm.

It would be absurd to get a false impression of this man. He was an entirely loveable and human sort of man; he had a family of his own, two daughters and one son. He was a religious man, a vestryman in his church. You doubtless think you have broader sympathies than he; on the contrary, he had broader sympathies than you. I do not know just exactly what charity means nowadays (it used to mean love in Greek) but this man would pass for a broadly charitable man. I do not imagine you spend very much of your time on any sort of charity, anywhere, anytime, at all. You see, he knew all you know

about it, and more. And, at that, he did not know how to begin being charitable: he gave two-pound boxes of candy. No one knows how to begin being charitable. Somehow the beginning is at the wrong end. We are ready to lay our charity at the needy one's feet; but the puzzle is, why did the needy one become needy? Why was he allowed? There was a famous corpse rose up once and cursed the rose-bearers, asking why such deeds had not been done while the corpse yet breathed. Too many of us are carrying roses to corpses.

Mr. Howard Ellamo lay dying. The immanence of his dying was within him, though he roused himself with false hopes. He sincerely wanted to do good, because of the permeating demand of his own soul, agitated by breaths of eternity. He thought he wanted to do good as a testimonial of his getting well. Never mind what he thought. Because it was too late to matter what he thought. It was even too late to matter what he did. A man's deeds should be done when he is thoroughly alive, able to watch them, to construct them.

Lo, and behold, all of a sudden, Mr. Howard Ellamo was dead.

Mr. Steiner, the junior partner, was a good business man. Advertising is advertising—even

if it be for a man who is staring into a world where he will have absolutely nothing to sell. So, as each list of girls' names came in from each forelady, and as each forelady murmured some appropriate remark about the astounding effrontery with which Fate approaches the most superior of persons, Mr. Steiner wheeled and said:

"Wouldn't it be a good thing for all the employees to get up a sort of general notice of their regrets, etcetera? Something to—ah, sort—ah, testify publicly to—ah, their regard for Mr. Ellamo? We could have 'em all at the burial. Have it in the newspapers, too."

The foreladies, quite miraculously, thought it a good idea. A mass-meeting of all the workers was held—all the new Luellas, who had answered new "*Help Wanted—Female*" advertisements, and who still had new worlds by which to be conquered. The resolutions were passed, dealing at length with the goodness of the deceased and the love in which his memory was kept by all who had had the fortune to be employed by him. It made quite an obituary.

There was one forelady who was an old maid. She too was "not much good." She was getting a bit aged and she had no place else to spend her Christmas and so she did up eight of the two-

pound boxes and took them out to the girls in the charity ward at Segmore.

All the patients were well enough to be about, for an hour or two. There was a great deal of genuine joy in their quarter. They laughed like the little children they once had been; their pinched faces lost that extraordinary expression which accompanies life when life folds in upon itself . . . a placid sombreness.

The forelady distributed the boxes amid hand-claps. The girls were undoubtedly happy. They held up old familiar forms of chocolates which they had once dipped themselves. In giggling, agitated fashion they rushed about until they aroused fevers.

The forelady mentioned Mr. Ellamo's death.

"Isn't it too bad!" said Luella vivaciously.

Everybody agreed it was; and a discussion arose as to which "gentleman" he had been at the factory. One girl had seen him drive away in his motor car. Another had seen him twice on a tour of inspection.

These were immediately frankly envied by the rest.

"What did he look like?" asked Luella.

"I saw him in a gorgeous fur coat.. Handsome old man—"

The other: "I didn't think he looked *old*."

"Well, distinguished. Elegant."

And so on.

That night, eight feverish, touselled heads tossed upon pillows daubed with chocolate stains. The sheets were daubed with chocolates. The nightgowns were daubed with chocolates. Each girl clinging greedily to her own box had gone to sleep—a light, unhealthy sleep—with her chocolates clutched in her fretful hand or slipped under her pillow. Consumptives are very fond of bon-bons.

You never get well at Segmore. It is the “last” hospital, the hospital at which you always die.

LILLIE

IN a certain part of the swampy country of Southern Missouri we used to gather each November, some ten or twelve of us, because of the excellent shooting there. Duck abounded through the crisp marshes,—teal and mallard and canvasback and wood-duck,—quail, and plenty of cotton-tail rabbits. We were very cozy, with our long tramps by day and our log fires by night. We practically took possession of an old hotel (called Miller's Rest), brought down our own whiskies and liqueurs and cigars from the city, and gathered every evening around our smoking game dinners for a jovial meal and a long, intimate talk afterward. Every member of this little hunting club was happy. The brisk air, the eagerness of the hunt, the tension of muscles, the clean breeze in our eyes and ears all day out in the open, brought back upon us—we were, mostly, middle-aged men—a sort of boyishness. In the evenings, therefore, we relaxed. Sometimes we drowsed, from having been in the wind. Oftener we chatted about this and that, a whim, an inconsequential affair, a woman or two, a certain vintage, a good shot, a

bad shot, . . . a story. Such stories! Sometimes the Judge, who wore a neat purple corduroy coat and parted his hair every morning before setting out with his shotgun, would tell of an amusing case tried before him; sometimes the Doctor, a loutishly built and dressed man with a heart of gold, gave us glimpses into human life such as physicians alone obtain. Sometimes one, sometimes another spoke, idly, at random, over the cigars.

Well, one night the girl who worked in the hotel brought in our coffee, and as she swung easily out of the door with her tray under her arm, Norrbín looked after her intently. Norrbín is described in a word—ten words. Swede, soldier of fortune, forty-four, swordsman, crack shot, friend of Oom Paul, Captain of Obaldia's guard—and so on. Clean-cut, decent . . . and, after all that, bashful!

The Doctor noted the keen glance. "That kind is a nice, stupid kind of woman," he said idly, "who moves safely through a stupid girlhood to a stupid marriage. All happy and nice and safe."

"Does she?" asked the Swede, quickly. "Listen to me, then." And he told this story:

This girl reminded me of a girl. Her name was Lillie. That is all I know. No, indeed, I am not digging up one of my own lost romances.

But—you said something about this girl here being happy. Happy, you said. And so I am eager to tell you about the girl named Lillie.

This happened when I was investigating sociological conditions—in Massachusetts. I was working then under a State commission on immigration. I have seen some sights there—and that means a great deal; for I have traveled this world thoroughly, and I am a Swede. Swedes, you may not know, are very moody and introspective. They get it from their snow and mountains and frost.

Well, I was in Fall River, where they have cotton mills. Almost everybody there works, works hard, very many, many hours a day, as many hours as the law will let them. The father of a family works in the mills, the mother, the sons, the daughters—every one except the babies. Sometimes it is a great deal of trouble to take care of the babies at home and to work in the mills at the same time. But somehow it is done, and the world wags on, and you and I go shooting.

Almost all the people there are foreigners—Portuguese, and so on. Oh! A little bit of everything. That's how I came to be there with my sociological census and my fountain-pen and my questions. Knock on a door, pry in, ask questions. I was a fascinated busybody. Some-

times I would laugh with these people—generally only an old man or a very young girl tending a baby was about the house—and sometimes I would bite my lip and think hard, very hard, as I came away. It was peculiar work for a man of guns and sabers!

Well, late one afternoon I knocked at the door of a flat. The door was opened slowly and in a very trembling fashion by a broken-down old man. He did not tremble in fear. It was more as if he had lost the direction of his muscles. Except for a baby girl in a chair he was alone. His name was Danielson—Sigurd Danielson. He was a Swede, of course, and we talked in Swedish. How many in his family? His wife, the baby, two little sons, and a daughter. Any dead? No. Any ill with tuberculosis? No. How many wage-earners? All, except himself—and the baby. They worked in “the mills,” at one task and another. His daughter Lillie was a weaver who made ten dollars a week. He, too, had worked there . . . but he had broken down and now could do nothing. Fortunately for him and the baby, all were making good wages. Lillie was doing especially well.

It is peculiar, my friends, that the men in these families generally “break down,” as they call it, first of all. The mother, in spite of being weakened by child-bearing, seems to be able to

endure longer. In fact, these men move in a certain definite line through life. You can figure them mathematically. It is pitiful. It is like plotting a curve in calculus. You can easily plot the curve of the poor man's life! It is ascending in his youth from poverty; when he marries, it climbs still higher, for his wife is always a wage-earner herself, you see. They get so that they can live in comparative comfort. Then comes the first child. The curve of this man's life begins its downward bend there. Gradually, very gently. But the next child, and the next, and the next—they have a regular rabble of children, these people!—carry him farther down into penury. For a while, when his children grow up, they support him and his wife. Then they begin to have troubles of their own,—old age, misery, starvation. . . . There you are! And this law, this curve, works steadily. You can get from the tables a grand percentage on it. It is very interesting.

Old Danielson was glad to talk his language with a stranger, and so he invited me in. I call him old. He could not have been more than fifty; yet his back was palsied, his hands were cramped, his eyes as expressionless as an absinthe-drinker's. He looked at me as if he were very weary, and dreaming, and sad. When I spoke of Stockholm, the boat from Hull, the mountains

up in the Lapland country, he smiled, but he smiled as if somebody had said a very bitter thing to him which could no longer hurt him.

"I am quite content here," he said very hesitatingly, "if things go on as they are and we all stay well. But if any one should get sick! These doctor bills!"

It was Lillie this and Lillie that in that house. So I found out, in fifteen minutes. The meals, the mending, the boys' lessons . . . you know. One of these lads was fourteen; the other twelve. One earned four dollars a week; the other two and a half. You would have smiled if you had sat and listened. Mention the name of a Danielson, and in the next breath you got the wages he made! Well, it was a very important point to the old man with the broken back. I assure you, I did not smile.

That was on a Saturday night, when they all brought their wages home. I was introduced around. It is an odd sight, these Saturday nights of the poor.

The mother sat at the table, with the lamp near by. She put on a pair of cheap spectacles. Without a word each child came up and placed his wages in her hand. She spreads it out on the table, if there are nickels and pennies to be counted. Then she gives back to each a little pocket money. That is all, you see, that each

worker gets out of his week's work . . . that, and a roof over his head. It is very primitive, isn't it? Patriarchal . . . with the mother as patriarch. But only in this way can the home survive; and the home is the all-important thing, after all. Isn't it? Mrs. Danielson made six dollars. Lillie proudly stepped up—just such a looking girl as the one that went out that door—and put her ten dollars in the pool. The boys laid down six dollars and a half. A fortune! A Golconda, believe me. Twenty-two dollars and a half a week, and only five people and a baby to support. No wonder that every now and then Lillie got a new waist, or a neck-ribbon, or a pair of shoes. That night we had a Swedish punch in celebration. And I went out and bought beer, and a fine cigar for the old man, and candy, and a baby's rattle. I tell you truthfully it was very, very pleasant indeed.

All except one thing. I had a word or two with Lillie, aside. She said: "It has been a great deal of fun to-night. But I am beginning to be a very unhappy woman."

Then my work took me elsewhere, and I came back . . . later . . . in the spring. The old man was alone again with the baby; sitting by the open window, looking out. He did not move. He cried, "Come in!" when I knocked. When he recognized me, he broke into Swedish

greetings, and then he sat silent again, looking out of his window. I did not know what to say, to take up our friendship where it had left off. Old men and old women, you know, are so imperturbable. It is hard to break through them into their hearts; they seem strangers at once, even if you leave for but a few moments. I think they must live in a strange country, these old people.

Finally Danielson began of his own accord. "It is spring," he murmured. . . . "Spring! I suppose that is it." Then he looked up. "Lillie wants to get married," he said, very simply.

I waited a moment, wondering keenly if he would bring in right there that subject which was all-important to him; and he did. "We would lose her wages," he remarked. He twirled one thumb against the other very gravely, intent upon his nails, it seemed. But he really was a sweet-hearted man, and his thoughts were elsewhere than on the money.

"Who can blame her, Norrbinn?" he went on. "In the spring? Heh? The spring . . . youth . . . love." His Swedish was full of melody to hear. "How the gladness runs through young things in such a month as this! I have watched her . . . I, her old father . . . here in this room. How she sucks in the air and trembles! How she broods! How she is sad! She is a

Swede, Norrbin. It is a fine thing to be a Swede, and young, and feel the spring. That is what is the matter with our Lillie."

"Who is the fellow?" I asked.

"You cannot stop her. Not in a month like this.—He is a teamster.—This is the time of the heart, of a young girl's heart.—A nice fellow, too. He makes seven dollars and a half a week, a dollar and a quarter a day.—I was young once . . . in Upsala. In Upsala it was that I fell in love, with my own Sophie here. And so I have told Sophie over and over again,"—he nodded his head at me, stupidly, like a wise man,—"but she is bitter. She will not hear of it. Hard work has made Sophie forget her own young days. We have not done as well as we thought we would do in this country, and that presses in on the heart . . . you know how. But I do not like what Sophie is doing. I don't."

"What is Mrs. Danielson doing?" I said, bluntly.

"She is trying to frighten Lillie. I don't like that. It will do no good, anyway. I tell you, it is the spring!" he shouted, in exasperation. "Who has a hand or a tongue or a law that can stop the spring in a human heart? Heh?"

"A law?" I said.

"Yes. She—Lillie doesn't know anything, of course—Sophie tells her she will have her arrested if she marries Tom. You see, it is hard.

We would only have twelve dollars and a half each week, if she left us; well . . . see? Sophie is what you might call desperate about it. That she may be, too—twelve dollars and a half a week! And me a cripple, just like this. And Sophie getting older every day, and the boys a long way off from being any good to us. Sorrow and sorrow and sorrow! We bring them up to break our hearts and strip our home.” He turned to the window again.

“Something has happened that I want to tell you about, and ask your advice about,” remarked the old man. He took his pipe out of his mouth and wet his lips. “You remember the moonlight night? No? It was two nights ago. You should pay attention to moonlight nights, my son; they are very rare and very beautiful. Much more so than the days. If you were in love, now, you would have noticed that night. I never saw anything sweeter or softer. The whiteness was all hazy like a dream. It seemed to float up off the trees and the roofs out there into this window. It had something about it that seemed like a fairy-tale. Beautiful! It reminded me of an old boating-song my mother used to sing—” And abruptly he broke off, crooning a bar of it—in Swedish, of course. His talk was always in Swedish, very simple, but very pleasant to me.

“Have you ever gone walking through the

lanes with your sweetheart on a moonlight night, Norrbinn? Do you recall how something moist gets into your eyes, and how your hands grow tender toward her? Yes. There was something of that in this white night I am telling you about. It was very, very soft and mild and gentle.

"Well, Lillie wanted to go walking with Tom that night. Oh, I do not blame her! Not I! But she came in here to put on her hat, and her mother forbade her to go.

"*'Why?'* asked my Lillie, very quick.

"*'Because it only makes things worse,'* answered Sophie. *'You two cannot get married. If you go out on a night like this it will just make it harder for you to give each other up.'* Lillie stood straight, and her eyes slumbered like stars. She started to say something, but her mother went ahead quickly: *'And you must give each other up. I won't have it. You must.'*

"*'Must—must?'* said Lillie, her voice very hard.

"And Sophie answered: *'Don't use that voice to me, daughter. Obey.'*

"*'Obey?'* asked Lillie, and she looked very queer to me; but I smoked my pipe and made no noise. *'Obey?'* she said. *'I will not obey. Do you not think I am a woman, too? Am I to have no youth? No love? You had it. Am I to work and work—nothing but work—forever, as*

long as I can swing my 'arms? And you are my mother.' Here my Lillie began crying. 'Not as mother to daughter, but as woman to woman,—answer me, and tell me what right you have to take your love and deprive me of mine. It is because of the money, the money, the money that you do this. Well, I do not care for money. I want something that money cannot buy. I want it while I am young, I want it myself and *now!* I will work as hard as you have worked; and you know why you have worked so hard so gladly. It is because you are a woman who loved and who got what you wanted. So will I . . . But first I must have what I want. I have a right to some happiness, I think. I am not a weaving-machine. I am a woman, a woman nineteen years old. Don't you forget that. Don't you forget that.'

"Her mother was angry and crying and trembling all at once. What could I do? What she had said was true, all of it. And then, it is no use talking to women in a scene like that. Suddenly Sophie said very quietly:

"'Now, young lady, you shall hear my side. I shall be very particular with you, young lady. I shall not talk to you as a mother—if you want it so. I shall answer you "woman to woman," and here is what I shall say to you in cold truth: Remember that I am a human being who has

built up a home. A *home*, do you understand? All that I have to show for my years of work and worry is this home of ours, this roof over your head. Have you any idea how jealously I guard this home? No, you haven't. You are nineteen years old. But you don't know that I plan and skimp and scrape and save; and that I lie awake nights and that I work all day. You do know that I take all your money every Saturday night. You do know that I make you all to go without carfare and better clothes, make you sometimes when it hurts me very deeply to have to do it. You do know, and sneer at me for it, that I think all the time about "the money, the money, the money." Yes, all this is true. Now, let me tell you why. You see that roof? I don't want that roof to come down, and I am the one who holds the roof up in place! It depends upon me, me, *me*! Not upon you, nor your poor father, nor the little ones; but upon me. And do you think that I want to keep that roof there for my own miserable head? Do you think that I am selfish? If you do, you have no idea of what a woman will sacrifice for her home. Sacrifice! Yes. And now here is the bitter pill for you to swallow, Lillie. Oh, my poor, dear, sweet little girl, I will even sacrifice *you* and your happiness to keep that roof there! Yes, that is the truth. I will do it—and not because I want to (you know that in

your heart!), but because I must. You are but one in six of us. *I must think of the other five!* Day and night and night and day I must think of the other five. It is very hard to say this, but it is the only way I know. If you leave us, I am afraid that roof will fall; for I am getting older and making less money every day, and it is a long time yet before the boys can help. Don't you see now, Lillie?"

"That was the way my wife talked to her.

"But my Lillie held on like death: 'I want my chance, though. You care for your home, of course. You ought to. But I don't. I want to begin my own home. Can you blame me? I have found a man, and he is a good man and he loves me. He is young and I am young. Haven't I a right to his love? It seems to me I have. It seems to me very natural that I should go out and build a roof of my own. And, after me, some day the boys there. Even the baby there some day. That is the way the world goes on. I must, I must have my Tom.' She stopped and cried a little, and then she went on: 'Think what it means to me, working there in those miserable mills all day, day after day, to have somebody love me! To have somebody whisper to me that I am pretty, that my lips are sweet, that my hair is soft! Oh, you can understand if you will only remember! Think what it means to me to have

somebody bring me little gifts—think of *my* having *presents*! To have somebody say nice things about my dress and neck-ribbons! To have somebody take me places—to picnics, to dances, where I can hear music! Do you think I can give these things up? Remember, I am very, very tired of work.'

"Then Lillie did a remarkable thing: she called her mother by her name—Sophie! She said:

"I am going out with Tom now, Sophie. We will talk all this over later to-night!' She slammed the door behind her.

"My wife looked at me and said: 'You heard? You know what it means? . . . She is a grown woman to-night.'"

The old man relit his pipe and looked at me a long time.

"Now, I want to ask your advice. What are we to do?"

Believe me, my friends, I was—as you call it—"stumped." So I said: "The women will work it out, somehow. Lillie will probably do as she thinks best, I should imagine."

He nodded as if he agreed with me. "When you come back again we shall probably know."

Well, Lillie married. The old man told me: "She came in to see me, her old father, late one afternoon here. I was sitting in this very chair, just like this. Her mother was out at the stores

for a long time. Lillie ran across the floor and fell on her knees with her head against my breast. She was so happy! She was so happy that I cried and she cried and we kissed each other and sat still. Then she laid three dollars and a half in my lap and said:

“‘I am going to bring that to you, old daddy, just for yourself, every week. Tom and I between us make seventeen dollars and a half. It is fine! The first money I ever had! He gives me his wages every Saturday.’

“But it was not that that she had come to see me about. She had come to set herself straight with me, her father. She had come, you might say, to confess.

“‘I just had to, daddy,’ she said. ‘It may have been the moonlight. It may have been Tom. It may have been something inside of me that was pulling. I would turn and look into his eyes, in the shadow, daddy, and all at once my blood would rush through me, and I would close my eyes. When he put his arms around me and kissed me, I gave in. I promised. I forgot everything that mother had said. I forgot this old home of ours. I took his face in my hands, I ran my fingers through his hair. It was sweet, oh, so sweet, daddy!—and so wonderful!’

“I told her yes, I knew all about it. You know what I said to you, Norrbinn, about nights like

that? Heh? So, soon after, she went away—back to her own home. Tom has been to see me, too. They are really happy. After a while they will come when Sophie is here, and it will be all right again."

"I hope so," I said to Danielson.

"For a while, for a while," he said, patiently.

"When *they* begin to have their own children, though, that will make a difference. Then their own troubles will come, and they will have to look after themselves. Then our troubles will come thicker. Who knows where we will go? What our end will be?"

It was true. Not long after the old man had to take to his bed with some sort of trouble in his back. The dreaded doctor bills! And the older boy twisted his foot and could not work. One little thing after another like that. Finally, in time, Lillie had her first baby. "Her own troubles had come." The old Danielson family moved somewhere else where the rent was cheaper. That is all. Except that Lillie sent me a Christmas card when I was in New York. She was very proud of her baby, it said.

Norrbin finished in a somewhat excited manner and looked around.

"A very interesting, perhaps pitiful case," said the Doctor. "But not a case for philanthropy."

"Philanthropy? No," announced the Judge

confidently. "That Danielson case is being taken care of by a higher philanthropy—I mean the philanthropy of Nature herself. There are too many such families."

THE RAVEN

"THERE was once a queen who had a little daughter, still too young to run alone. One day the child was very troublesome, and the mother could not quiet it, do what she would. She grew impatient, and seeing the ravens flying around the castle, she opened the window and said: 'I wish you were a raven and would fly away; then I should have a little peace.' Scarcely were the words out of her mouth when the child in her arms was turned into a raven and flew away from her through the open window. The bird took its flight to a dark wood and remained there for a long time, and meanwhile the parents could hear nothing of their child."

So runs the fairy-tale. But what I have to write is not a fairy-tale. Certainly, of all things, it is not a fairy-tale.

Alicia's mother was a seamstress in one of the packed districts of New York, around the corner and up a block from a moving picture show. Note the moving picture show. Mark the moving picture show.

Alicia's mother was a bony, middle-aged woman who, by much hunching over stitches in a bad light and by much consumption of tea, had

gathered unto herself nerves, a map of querulous wrinkles on her forehead, bad eyesight and a whining temper. Like so many other mothers who have to work, Alicia's mother had determined that Alicia should be a "lady." Therefore Alicia's little brother ran all the errands and washed and wiped the dishes. This latter because of the necessity of preserving the beauty of Alicia's hands. No lady should ever be told any of the vulgar-natural things about herself; therefore Alicia grew up with a perfectly blank and lady-like mind. Alicia dawdled. She dawdled to and at school and from school and at home. She had a dawdling school-chum named Martha—but Martha was to get over that.

Now, it happened that one day, after school, even Alicia's mother could not endure the proximity of so much lady-like idleness. It may have been worry, it may have been tea, it may have been overstrained eyes or all three. But, at any rate, her mother lifted her voice and said:

"Alicia, I do wish you would get out of the house and stay out for the rest of the afternoon. You're driving me crazy with your lips smacking eternally,"—Alicia chewed gum—"and your 'Ma, this,' and 'Ma, that.' For heaven's sake, let me alone until I get Mrs. Ralph's waist done."

"But, ma, where will I go?"

"I don't care. Anywhere. Out on the street."

Just like the queen in the fairy-tale, you see. And the raven flew out the open window.

Right here, let us take the paints and the blank canvas and paint something. We will paint something which Alicia's mother, so busy with making a living, had never had time to see—one of the phenomena of life. Never get yourself so tangled up in making a living, says some philosopher, that you have no time to look at life. It would have been interesting to hear what Alicia's mother would say to that. Probably she would answer that if she didn't make a living she would starve to death and, as soon as she was dead, life certainly would hold no phenomena for her. So, according to her code, she went on making a living and noticing nothing but gores and gussets, dimes and dinners. It is hard to find fault with the working mother; she is supposed to be Napoleon *plus* a Scotch cross-roads grocer *plus* Cornelia or whoever it was said her children were her jewels. She is supposed to be the engineer, fireman, conductor, brakeman and—locomotive. But perhaps this will fall under the eyes of some who are queens, like the lady in the fairy-tale, and so are relieved of making a living. And so have more time for life.

At any rate, here is the painting Alicia's mother overlooked:

Her girl had come to be fifteen years old. Treating only the externals, we shall paint in big, broad sweeps. Alicia was "big for her age." She wore stays now. She did up her hair in puffs and puffs and puffs. She was used to being addressed as "Miss" Sampson.

She was not unlike most girls of her age, who begin to feel the indescribable naissance of womanhood; not knowing exactly what to do, she mimicked her elders. She wore French heels, and threw "airs" into her conversation. She rolled her eyes, worked her eyebrows up and down, let her eyelids droop. Spoke an affected language; used her hands ostentatiously, as if they were elegant and alien things on display. She hunched her shoulders, and affected a loose, undulant motion in walking. Before her mirror she tried for a piquant expression; but resigned it for the easier "baby stare." She was continually patting her hair, smoothing down her bodice and her hips. She thought of little except "style" and the behavior of sophisticated ladies in the world. With what little spending money she had she bought ten-cent-store perfumes and powder; and she did day labor on her fingernails.

Poor Alicia! The dumbness in her must soon burst into sound. The negative be developed, with its high lights and its shadows, its garish

black-and-white image, *decoupé*, of a human soul. And this, the delicate time, we shall merely hint with brushes soft as down; for, in Alicia at this time the great Mystery lay, the vague, abashed, quivering, God-given thing. But half-guessed and all uncontrolled it made itself known to her by a thousand warm pulses, rising and rapid, flushing the ducts and cables of her body with blood mixed with yearning.

"But, mother, where shall I go?" said the raven.

"I don't care. Anywhere," said the queen.

Alicia went out and strolled majestically down the street in the warm spring afternoon. At the corner, so that incomprehensible Director of Destinies willed, she met Martha.

The raven was blonde; Martha was brunette. Otherwise they were a printing from the same type.

"Where yuh going?" said the one brought up as a lady.

"To the movin' pitcher show. It's only five cents.

"I aint' got it just now."

"Well, go get a nickel from your ma and come along."

So Alicia went back and got the nickel. Her mother never even asked her what it was for.

A cheap, tinsel edifice, formerly a shoe store.

Inside, a pitch dark, low-ceilinged box of a room. Wooden benches. A disgusting smell of multiple-breathed human breath, ammoniac reek of perspiration on the unbathed. A dim red light to the left, indicating a doubtful and rusty exit. In front the dingy screen upon which the mottled and galvanized pictures rippled off the story of some classic sweetheart carried away at dawn by her passionate lover. The heroine threw a riding-cloak over her night dress and was borne down a ladder from the window of a castle. The hero wore doublets, hose, sword, a feather in his hat, spurs. A great iron-grey horse awaited them. They mounted, wheeled and started off. The chase began. Lure! Romance! Adventure! Dare and do! Love! Passion! Lure!

Others followed.

It was all action, feverish action, cut to the very quick and kept there. No explanations were offered, save those which each unskilled brain in the rapt audience could give itself. Men whipped out revolvers, shot each other; women suddenly kissed men; and so on. Act followed act rapidly without leaving time for digestion, even if those who watched had any powers of digesting such miraculous scenes. Thus for three-quarters of an hour the fantastic, dazzling display gave them sensation after sensation; and the gaping crowd, absorbed, forgot them; absorbed new ones, im-

mediately forgot them—craving endlessly more. More bowing, smiling, kissing, shooting, trickery, disguises, thievery, pantomime passion, slapstick comedy, runaways. The grotesque. The ignoble. The dramatic.

Then, with a violent final click the machine stopped. Lights were turned on. The two front doors thrown open. Voices bawled: "Out this way, ladies and gents. This way out!" The show was over.

Alicia quivered nervously, looked at Martha a moment and then smiled.

"Ain't yuh ever been before? It's great, ain't it?" asked her guide.

Alicia said huskily: "Wasn't Juliet sweet-looking? Do you suppose people reely kill themselves for love?"

"Uh-huh," replied the matter-of-fact Martha.

Coming out into the glare of sunlight, Alicia was as much bewildered in her mind as she was in her actual vision. She had heard plenty of times of the moving picture show but her mother had never taken her and had never given her the money to go. Now she had seen it, it was wonderful. She wanted to go again and again.

And here we come to the ravens flying around the castle, the ravens which Alicia's mother had *not* seen.

Loitering about the door of the moving picture

show, a group of young fellows stood. Their clothes were the kind you see in so-called "dressy acts" in vaudeville. They exhibited themselves in nervous attitudes, jingling coins in their pockets, hitching their shoulders, stepping quickly around among the outcoming crowds, smoking cigarettes, throwing occult remarks in slang from one to the other. Now and then one of them successfully picked the pocket of a patron of the show; though this work was generally done inside after the lights were out. Inside they stood up at the back of the hall and jostled those who, entering suddenly from the sunlight, were temporarily blinded. One at each elbow and a third to do the actual rifling.

But pocketpicking was only one of the pursuits.

Hardly had Alicia and Martha passed slowly, arm in arm (ostentatious and ogling, of course), a half a block down the street before Martha whispered, giggling: "Oh, Alicia, he's following us!"

Alicia thrilled. "Who?"

"The one with the grey felt hat."

"The black haired one?"

Before the girls could say anything more they heard a cheery: "Hello, little girls!"

Alicia was frightened and muttered, "Keep straight on, Martha. Don't stop."

But the youth in the grey felt hat circled in front of them. In his technical language he "braced" them. He stood stock still in front of them, both arms akimbo. He had a frank, pleasant grin on his face, chewed gum rapidly and chatted with careless ease.

"Didn't I see youse two down at Coney last year?" He looked at Martha. "Didn't youse hand me back my hat when it fell off wit me in the swing? *Sure*, yuh did." His "sure" was inimitable, ingratiating.

There was a terrific trepidation in each girl's bosom.

"Let's go on, Martha," said Alicia hastily.

"Aw no, Martha," he interrupted, picking up the name easily. "Stand still a minute and rest yer tired feet." He had a healthy, saucy-looking face, with its dimples, flashing black eyes and olive skin.

Both girls giggled.

He drew some gum from one pocket. "Have a chew, Martha," he said brightly. She took a stick. "Have a chew, Blondie,"—this to Alicia, whose name he did not know.

Again both girls giggled, this time at his nickname for Alicia.

He pulled out a big gold watch. "It's twenty minutes past three, girls," he said. "At half past

they put on a new set of films. Like to see it? I'll blow yuh."

"Oh!" said Alicia, half aloud. She was still under the lure of the moving picture show.

The host lost no time. "Come on, Martha. Blondie's crazy to go. Can't yuh see it? Let's go down to the drug store and get a soda while we're waiting."

Both girls looked at each other, squeezed each other's hands to emphasize their sense of mutual protection, giggled again and accepted the invitation.

As the three came back and went in to see the new set of films, one of the youths outside whistled sharply under his breath and said to another: "Gee, pipe the two pippins Morello's got."

"Morello Jim," as they called him, was a younger brother of an Italian politically prominent in the Bureau of Licenses in City Hall. Hence he was what his gang called, "in right," politically. He never was arrested, no matter what he did. And some of the things he did made Sing Sing itch. He made plenty of money by "turning up" hucksters and peddlers without a license and sending them with his card to see his brother in City Hall. This brother then took the victims into a side room, "shook them down" for ten or twenty dollars, or whatever he estimated he could get out of them, assured them

that "it was all right"; that "they didn't need a license"; and turned them loose to be later picked up and fined in the general course of official business. The brother gave Morello Jim a percentage on all he "turned up."

When Alicia and Martha came out, at five o'clock, their escort said: "I'll walk to the corner wit youse. Say, kid,"—he turned to Alicia—"wot's yer name? Honest, I hate to call anybody I like as well as I do you, 'Blondie'." He grinned again boyishly.

"Her name's Alicia," said Martha, quickly.

"Al-what?"

"Al-ice-yah," answered Alicia, making a mouth.

"Alice is as far as I can get," he laughed.

"Alice, where art thou going?"

It was "the first time she had ever been talked to this way," as she explained later to herself. And she rather liked it. It make her feel—oh, well, as if she was not a stick-in-the-mud. As if she knew something about the life in the streets. The cameraderie, you understand, which existed between ladies and gentlemen. Most young people have a feeling, scarcely definable, that they "ought to investigate life for themselves." They are anxious to change from second-hand information to first-hand information. It was the idea that at last she was really doing this that pleased

Alicia; nevertheless in answer to Jim's question she replied:

"I'm going home. It's five o'clock."

"So'm I," said Martha.

At the corner he stopped and flourished his hat. "Ladies, the pleasure has been all mine to-day." (It had. During the show he had found out where they lived, that neither of them had a big brother or a father, and that they "loved" to go to the picture show). "I'm always here at the same old stand at the same old time. And if you don't see me 'round, just ask some of my gang for Morello Jim."

"My gang." A gold watch. "Elegant" clothes. Money to spend for soda and moving pictures. And willing to do it again.

Martha was the practical one. "Nice fellah, ain't he? I'm glad we met him," she said.

Alicia was the idealist. "Oh, yes!"—fervently,—was all she said. In her brain as she walked home seethed the magic, the enchantment of a new world; a world full of tinselled fronts, mysterious darkness in which to whisper with a well-dressed, young, handsome hero, wonderful picture shows of all sorts of people doing all sorts of grand and noble and daring and decisive things. Most of all, a world out from under her mother's wing, her stupid, whining, nervous mother who never stirred from her flat

except to deliver sewing, who never told her anything about the world, who probably—who certainly—knew nothing of that wonderful world Alicia had seen to-day.

The late and mellow afternoon sun gilded up her dusty, sordid street. Romeo—Juliet! Romeo, dark-eyed, handsome, stealing by moonlight to the forbidden window, fighting and dying for love. What did Romeo whisper when he held her so tight? What made her smile so sweetly, and put her hand in his? What is love all about, anyway? The grown-up people knew. But the grown-up people never seem to tell. Romeo—Juliet! Alicia had seen none in her life in the world. Must they be dream-people, all in white brocaded gowns and old-fashioned clothes? Love—love—love; she almost sang as she passed the dirty brick apartment houses. No. They weren't dream people. She knew. She felt as if she *could* be—would some day be, herself, Juliet.

All through her body the lax warmth of that spring sun spread. She had never known an afternoon when she had felt so happy, so strong, so joyously on the edge of tantalizing, secret, wonderful things. She could not explain herself to herself (she had neither the native judgment nor the grown wisdom) but ignorant as she was she apprehended Juliet in that show she had seen.

"Where were you all this time?" asked her mother, sharply.

"At a moving picture show."

"Good land! Who with?" still more sharply.

"With Martha Thomson."

"A moving picture show! Good land! *I* never have time to go to one. Nice way of wasting time and money. Thank Heaven, though, you were out of mischief."

That night in bed the magnetism of it all seized her again. She lay awake until long after her mother and brother were asleep, thinking over each detail of her extraordinary experience. In the first place, the idea of going to the show at all. She had lived around the corner from it for over a year and the idea had never occurred to her. Then, the way that man, Morello Jim, had stepped up and spoken to them. It was not at all the way she had ever expected to "catch a fellow." What he had done was so simple—yet so wonderful! People didn't step up and speak to strangers, especially young lady strangers, except in stories. And yet it had actually occurred to her—and Martha—and it seemed all right.

Later on, Alicia fell into a sleep full of dreams. She dreamed she saw a great multitude of young, stylishly dressed men all bowing with their hats off, bowing to her. There was a great band playing; she could see the cymbals clash together,

the trombones slide out and in. Suddenly a shout went up. They were shouting to her. What was the word? "Blondie!" Then she was sitting in a great golden palace, looking at a moving picture show: and what should she see in the pictures but herself! She was the heroine, Juliet, dressed all in white with a golden cord binding her hair; and a feathered knight sat on a great grey horse below her window. He held a gold watch in his hand and was speaking: "It's time to start," he said, "or your mother will catch us." She looked down more closely into his face. It was Morello Jim! Again, she felt herself floating, floating and deathly sick. It seemed as if no one was near her and she called faintly once or twice for her mother. But no one answered. She heard herself saying, "I shouldn't have taken that ice cream soda. It has made me deathly sick. There must have been poison put in it." That was the last she remembered.

Alicia's mother had no occasion after that day to exercise her temper on her daughter. Alicia herself voluntarily went out. Always with Martha. Always they met Jim. And pretty soon Jim began talking about dance halls and two-dollar shows and suppers in cafés on Broadway, "if they could get away nights for a little while."

Right here let the story of the raven be halted while we heed the foundations of Martha. The

foundations of Martha were in her mother, a certain Mrs. Thomson, who conducted, operated, ran, and moreover, made a success of a boarding-house. This is no easy thing to do, and it left Mrs. Thomson very little time in which to get herself aesthetically and culturally in tune with the latest scientific analyses of the subject of Children. In fact, it must be said (greatly to Mrs. Thomson's disparagement, no doubt), that she was of the old school which believed if you spared the rod you spoiled the child. Mrs. Thomson had been brought up in a sterner age and in a small, mid-Western town, before as yet all children were experiments in neurosis. And inasmuch as the best literature on nerves has not yet percolated down to our lower classes, Mrs. Thomson's daughter did not to her assume the form of a problem in psychology.

To put it as Mrs. Thomson would have put it: she knew her daughter and her daughter knew her.

It may be—and doubtless is—that presiding over a boarding-house *and* making it pay gives the president an extraordinary faculty of seeing through the essential humanities of human beings. At any rate, Mrs. Thomson saw through Martha. Her daughter kept no secret from her longer than a week. And one night a talk was had, in which physical and metaphysical points

were emphasized, sundry wails went up and the course of the stars suddenly shifted for Alicia.

For Martha ceased coming to the afternoon meetings with Morello Jim, at the moving picture show.

Alicia could not. Did not.

"Where were you to-day? At that moving picture show again?" asked Alicia's mother, sharply.

"Yes."

"With Martha Thomson?"

"Yes."

Alicia had begun to lie to her mother.

It is hard to blame a girl who considers herself "starved" of "life." She has so many things to say in her own behalf. You who have gone through the romantic part of life sensibly in a groove; or you who have been shoved one way, pulled another through your romance—are apt now to clamp down your jaws and deliver prim axioms at an Alicia. But the Alicias are going to reply to you: But you know because you have lived through your romance! And we can only know by living through ours! Or words to that effect.

What this Alicia really said was: "Oh, ma's a stick-in-the-mud. She doesn't know anything, and never will!"

Thus slowly it happened. Alicia watched her mother, questioned her closely. When she found her mother would be out delivering goods around dinner-time—Mrs. Sampson sometimes purposely waited until then in order to “collect,” being sure her patrons were then at home—Alicia took dinner with Jim on Broadway. On such occasions she was perfumed pitilessly and dressed her most pitiful best. Afterward she told her mother she had eaten dinner with Martha.

In all it did not take a month to accomplish the result. Alicia began wearing home a number of things which Martha had lent her, new lace collars, barettes, cheap rings and the like. In fact, all sorts of superficialities which appeal to young girls. They seemed to be permanently loaned; for Alicia forgot to return them.

Then there came lapses in Alicia’s usual dawdling behavior; she showed nervousness, sometimes she cried, sometimes she was stubborn—“brazen,” Alicia’s querulous mother called her. She lied more and more; became tangled in her lies; and under her mother’s vindictive and spiteful questioning she often broke down and sobbed: “I wish I was out of this place. I wish I was dead.”

Said the Commissioner of Police, who was a harsh man with mustachios: “Madame, you are

the fifth woman who has come to me to-day with details of her daughter's disappearance. All I can say is, our detectives will do all they can to locate her for you. Nineteen girls reported disappeared last week."

The poor, little, bewildered seamstress sat and stared at him, her underlip trembling. "But, sir, I am sure—*sure* she has met with foul play. She would surely have told me what she was going to do." Tears came streaming down her cheeks. "My poor, poor, dear little girl!"

"That's all I can do," said the Commissioner, abruptly.

Alicia's mother sat staring at her creased and trembling fingers, interlocked and pressed tightly to conceal her emotion. Like so many of us, Alicia's mother was a mild little person who scarcely ever thought that there might be cruelty and brutality in the outer world, the strange world which lay clear outside her living. None of us ever thinks there is such a thing as a villain until the villain has done us harm. Such characters, such conceptions are for romance, for the stage. You know no villains and I know no villains. Until the astounding villainy is done.

Alicia's mother began to cry softly in the austere Commissioner's office. "My poor, sweet little girl, that I suffered for," she sobbed, "when I brought her into this world! Why—why—my

own little baby that I nursed and watched over! That I've taken in sewing for, ever since my husband died, sir! That I've worked my fingers down to the bone for, and made so many, many sacrifices for! Alicia—that I sent to school and tried to make a regular little lady of! My baby—my baby girl—my baby—” she broke off, moaning.

The old man who watched her was sixty years old. Wrinkles ran across his forehead where he had lifted the skin in habitual thought. The corners of his eyes drooped suddenly into marked lines where he had let his lids fall in answer to men's rebuffs, biding his time and searching his mind for justice. Downward from each nostril ran the heavy lines which marked his determination. He was a man who had spent a lifetime amid human cruelties; and, looking at the drooping shoulders of Alicia's mother, her flat chest and weary face, he felt a sudden softness.

He began, methodically: “Did she frequent moving picture shows?”

The seamstress sat up with a start. “Why, y-yes.”

“Uh,” grunted the fierce old man. “Why didn't you stop it?”

“Why—why, I don't know. I never thought. —Has that anything to do with it?”

"Of course it has. At least it may have," said the Police Commissioner severely. "Why didn't you watch your daughter? Why didn't you make it your business to see where she was spending her time, . . . eh?"

Alicia's mother sat silent, spasmodically clutching her fingers.

"Instead of making it *my* business now to find her for you . . . eh? What's the matter with you women nowadays? Your mother wasn't so busy but what she watched you, didn't she?" He softened his voice to the pathetic little figure. "Now, didn't she?"

"Y-yes," admitted Alicia's mother, without looking up.

"Yes. And when she found you doing something she didn't approve of she let you know it, too, didn't she? Didn't she? Come, now; I was a boy long before you were a girl. I know what my mother did to *me*."

"She—she used to be very hard on me," said the seamstress with a vague, tremulous smile.

"Yes. And she probably didn't use an effete, modern brand of moral suasion, either. At least, mine didn't. But—" And suddenly the Commissioner became terrible—"how often have you been hard on Alicia? Have you ever been? Even one single time?"

"N-no, sir," she stammered. "I just didn't

have the heart to. And besides, I was so busy."

"And did you know anything about moving picture shows when your daughter first told you she was going to them?"

"No."

"Well, did you take her yourself and try to find out what she liked about them?"

"No."

"Well, why didn't you?"

"Why, I was busy. I had to make our living."

He stared at her, frowned and bit his lip. Then he asked with a curious softness: "Have you any more daughters?"

"No, sir. Only a little boy."

At thought of her lonely little son she again burst out crying. The Commissioner watched her keenly a moment; then said, in a kindly fashion:

"Well, I will try to find your daughter for you if you promise me you will take such care of your little boy that you will never need to come to me or my successors about him."

She began sobbing, "My poor little Alicia! My poor little girl!"

"Now, now; this isn't the time for crying," he said to her gently, as he led her to the door. Then, as she tottered at the head of the stairs, irresolute, he shouted: "And spank that boy

whenever he needs it! Spank him good!" For the Police Commissioner was quite a character.

But there was no need to set the detectives in action. Alicia's own tortured soul lifted her case out of their hands. Her poor pathetic dream of a Juliet, after its brutal awakening, went on to the end of the old, old story. At sixteen, in her ignorance and despair, she knew but one thing to do. And yet she was afraid to do that; so she walked the streets of another, an even more sordid part of the town. And she did not know where to look for pity; and she did not know where to look for hope. The thing which she had thought would be sweetness, now showed its horrid visage to her staring young eyes as a nightmare, a ghastly shame; a shame which swept from her feet to the pit of the sky, enveloping her, enveloping the world, enveloping everything. A shame she could not take back to her mother, and to her little brother.

And so she resolved at length to be what, in her poor little mind, Alicia called "brave."

This, as I have told you, is not a fairy story, by any means.

For the fairy story about the raven ends in her kissing her hero for delivering her from bondage and she says: "Now you have indeed set me free and to-morrow we will celebrate our marriage."

And Alicia's ends:

Paterson, N. J., May 15.—The body of a young girl was found floating in the river here to-day. She was evidently a suicide. A letter found in her pocket was addressed to Mrs. Euphemia Sampson, 238 West 38th Street, New York City, and signed Alicia. The letter said, simply: "I have decided to end it all." The police theory is that the girl was a so-called White Slave from New York.

THE POET

"What do you think of this? I'm not going to tell you what I think about it myself. I prove my point simply by telling you the story. Don't I? I prove I had imagination enough to see the story. That's my point; and I'm nothing but a miserable, weak worm of a business man. See?

"What I want to tell you is about a duffer named McTrouville. French-Irish extraction. Age, thirty-five, plump, smooth, finicky about his clothes. A New Yorker. A piano salesman. He used to live at this very chop house, because—well, he was trying his best to be a gentleman, and they helped him here to carry out the bluff. He could dress like a gentleman here. He could eat like a gentleman here. He could drink like a gentleman here. A gentleman in a gentleman's club. See? He could converse. He could pose. He could put his little finger in the air when he held his fork. He could modulate his voice, refine it, when he addressed a waiter. All that sort of thing counted, and counted tremendously with McTrouville. You see it was partly because he only really lived at night. He vegetated in the day-time; but he blossomed

after business hours. To him the business of selling pianos was merely a vague means to a mild end; the end was that he could sit in this grill room from eight in the evening until, say, two in the morning in ample animal content. The rest of life was nothing. You know there are people like that in this world, especially in New York. And especially at the age of thirty-five, which you remember I told you, was his age.

"By the way, let me branch off here a moment and tell you something about New York. You come here broke and you work hard until you amount to something, until the money begins to come in. Not too much of it, but just enough to let you be a little bit luxurious with yourself. Then you begin to loaf; you begin to float. And there's only one way you can float. Down stream. Everyone does it in New York, everyone that is successful and that has just one teeny knuckle missing out of his backbone. You generally begin when you're about thirty and by the time you're thirty-five it's come to be a nice, easy, fixed habit. Smoke and talk and eat and drink and float. Especially plenty of talk and especially plenty of drink.

"Now, I'm not so far off my story as you might think, because all this applies to McTrouville. Mac was floating. He had a charming manner about him; what we call a 'pleasing

personality'—he had to have, to sell pianos. I can't forget the man. I liked him immensely."

"I didn't," said the harsh little man with the goatee. He was a literary man, named Fergus, who made the third at our table.

"Naturally you wouldn't," went on the worm of a business man. "He was always poking fun at you because he knew more about literature than you did. However, I can't forget Mac. And I can't forget him because of one permeating memory. As I said, he was trying to live the life of a gentleman—with all the agony of repression and all the agony of luxury which the word implies—upon the salary of a piano salesman. And he had actually gained something of his ideal, too. He had actually attained something of the smooth ballast of a clubman, you know. Groomed, rotund, quiet; extravagant, but extravagant in a matter-of-fact way. He went through anguish about his clothes and his neckties, trying to keep them quietly extravagant. That's the way with the floaters in New York. His gloves, his cane, his hose mimicked those of the young millionaires to the very up-to-datest fashion. You should have seen him when a waiter handed him his cane awkwardly. His stare was perfect.

"The fellow was lovable but, like everything in New York that he was trying to be, he was

all attitude. When he came through those swinging doors of an evening it was an attitude which said 'Good evening, Williams,' to the clerk; an attitude which ordered a cocktail at the bar—'Just a hint of orange bitters, Jack!'; an attitude which seated itself rather heavily and grandly at a table; an attitude which jerked open the evening paper and made a pretence of reading; an attitude which selected his choicely select, almost meticulous, meal. Attitudes, attitudes—of magnificence, of repose, of security. Little finger in the air. See?

"I want you to begin to get an idea of this man and then I'll tell you about his magnificent poem. There he moved . . . a bland, intelligent attitude, full of little, surface, mental surprises. A plump, clean-shaven man in eyeglasses, dinner coat, white, starchy expanse of linen, soft-handed, velvet-knuckled, dilettante.

"He hid as much as he could, I know now, but the one thing he could not hide was—defeat.

"You bet he was beginning to know his own defeat. That was the reason he fooled around so busily over the little, unimportant things of life. I know he accepted his defeat and did it calmly; I even knew he tried to cloak it, because I caught him several times. But when he talked, especially when he talked about himself, all through that talk ran the faint cry of his own

failure. Mac, you see, wasn't the kind that went down before his appetites in a grand crash of despair. He just piddled along. Delicately, always that; slowly, imperceptibly. I think there is a philosopher over in France who says that the important thing in life is not the series of big feats. The important thing is the series of gaps between the big feats. These gaps he practically calls lost worlds. Well, you will understand me when I say Mac's life was spent always among his lost worlds. His failure must have crawled on through years. It must have been, even then, such an intangible truth that he fooled himself at times into thinking it a spook. And, in front of the curtain of his secret chamber, here he stood, in spats and jewelry hocusing us with attitudes, attitudes.

"Have I left you any idea that he was vulgar, simply because he was fat and took life easy? Don't get the idea that he was vulgar. Mac felt. He cloaked and he attitudinized, but he felt.

"He said to me once that he had been educated in a Jesuit College—in Wisconsin, I think—and that he had gone on from there in the craving way in which they had started him. He read, read, read everything modern and ancient. Read with a real emotional craving to read. Read with nervous exaltation. He said: 'I think this

is how I became—well, a dilettante. I cannot explain it to you, but I must have been shut up too long. My father was an Irish politician in one of the wards in St. Louis. Of course, he wanted me to get out and hustle. But I had stayed in the closet too long. Hustle and force have always been—he paused and searched sincerely for the words—‘abominably vulgar to me.’ He threw up both his white hands and went into an attitude before my very eyes. ‘What was I to do? I had often thought of writing. Without trying to be affected, I can tell you I had the equipment. But I never wrote. I loved music.’ He held up his manicured finger-nails and carefully studied them. I knew he was also carefully studying whether he should say the next words. ‘So I went to selling pianos.’

“He had gormandized over books until he was twenty-six. Then he had idled with pianos for nine years. Now, in an irritating way, a spectre stalked through his consciousness, you see, the cruel, haunting, horrid spectre of personal failure. He absolutely did not dare to think of the future. Time and again he hinted as much. So he searched, for distraction, every labyrinth of his passing, present deeds. He could not order a dinner without going drowningly into each item, hugging the transaction to himself for what it was worth in temporary interest.

"I speak continually of his dinners because he had come to make much of eating. Of another sensation he had also come to make much, but by some blank stupidity of mine this escaped me for months, it was indulged in so casually by him amongst his attitudes. I mean—drink. Every evening he carefully put his clean linen and his dinner coat over his spectre and descended to the diningroom; every evening he crooked his little finger over the menu; every evening his jewelry shone; every evening he cut Fergus to pieces and taunted the shreds mildly; every evening he closed his eyes and would not look at the past or the future.

"The hustle of life, of New York, was abominable to him. If he had had money, he would not have needed to tolerate it at all. But he did not have money. And so he did what was, absolutely, for him, the next best thing. He shirked the vulgarity of bustling, as best he could, everywhere he could, and lived as nearly the life of a gentleman as he could, without money. That's the way the refinement of his taste went on, that's the way, too, that his physical laziness stealthily grew and clutched him. In time, if you get my meaning, his devious, persistent attempts to slip away from the anarchy of the world into the culture of his ideals brought on their own excess. McTrouville got to be dandi-

fied, extravagantly affected, an overdone man; yet, even then, curiously gross, curiously solid—and curiously melancholy.

"I said he used to twit Fergus. He did." Here the hard little man with the goatee nodded. "You see, Mac felt more real feelings in a minute than Fergus will in a thousand years." Here the harsh little man with the goatee raised his eyes. "Also, he knew more about literature than Fergus ever will." Here the harsh little man with the goatee shrugged one shoulder and yawned. "And Fergus was making a decenter living out of writing than Mac was out of selling pianos. Hence, mild antagonism. Hence, cross-questions and silly answers." He stopped. "It was due to one of these bouts that the poem—oh—was written. Fergus, what did you say?"

"I asked him, since he knew so much, why the devil he didn't write something."

The worm of a business man nodded. "Exactly. And he said a fellow didn't always write just because he knew. And he also said he might have been a poet once. Could be one even yet if he had a mind to. And he nodded at me and declared, 'You know I could!' I nodded yes, because I honestly believed he could. You see he really had an astounding knowledge of poetry; especially of minor poetry. He had such people as O'Shaugnessy, Dowson, Lazarus, Marston,

Laurence Hope and all that bunch at his tongue's end. And he had that Celtic throbbing of color and romance travelling weirdly underneath his smugness. Whatever he was, he was a man who actually had tears, Irish tears, for those places where created beauty demanded tears, or, at any rate, sought them. As I said, McTrouville felt. He cloaked and he attitudinized but he felt.

"Well, what happened was that Fergus put him on his mettle. 'I'll write you something some day that will make you gasp and take off your hat to the department store clerk!' he said.

" 'Some day. Yes, some day,' said Fergus. 'You're always going to do something some day. That's what's the matter with all you fellows. You procrastinate eternally. You float on the stream.'

"Mac sat back and glared at him. I could see the shot told. He watched us both for a few moments and then took a deep breath. 'I'll write it to-night,' he finally remarked.

"Fergus kept pushing him. 'Write what?'

" 'A poem.'

" 'A long one or a short one?'

" 'I don't know. But it will be a poem that will mean something.'

" 'Don't all poems mean something?'

" 'I don't think so. Mine will.'

“This interests me. What do you intend to put into it? Flowers and hours? Dreams—gleams? Love—dove? Is it going to be a sonnet, Mac, or an ode? Or maybe a triolet? A triolet’s easiest. Take my advice and start with a triolet; then you can get your hand in and work up to a ballade; and so on.’ Fergus talked something like that.

“Mac still kept taking him seriously. ‘Whatever it is,’ he said, ‘it will be a true poem. Something out of my own life. That,’—he shot a flash at Fergus—‘is where we go for all the true things we write.’

“And then I broke in. Fergus and I had to go to a publishers’ banquet that night and didn’t figure on getting home until late. And I told McTrouville so.

“‘No matter,’ he answered. ‘I’ll be sitting up waiting for you.’ Just then Fergus excused himself and went upstairs a moment. Mac took the opportunity gratefully. He leaned over and clasped my arm. ‘I couldn’t say it in front of him,’ he nodded, ‘but I mean to put my best into this. You’ll be surprised. I know you will. I’ve been thinking over some lines for a long time and I mean to put my best into this. You understand. It is remarkable what my life has been. Of course I am dissatisfied. Maybe, if this poem is a success—if you think it is a suc-

cess—I might try writing. It isn't too late in life you know, and I have a lot of things to say. And besides, it would sort of justify me to myself to write.' Fergus was returning. 'Don't say anything about this.' I nodded.

" 'Well, Mac, we'll be back at two o'clock,' Fergus broke in. 'You wait up for us with the masterpiece—and if it's good, I'll buy you a drink.'"

"As a matter of fact, though, it was half-past two before we got back. The drowsy night clerk let us in. The grill room downstairs was deserted.

" 'Mr. McTrouville about?' I asked. 'He said he would wait up for us.'

"The clerk grinned. 'He said something about writing some poetry,' he replied, and grinned again.

" 'Where is he?'

" 'Up in his room.'

"Fergus interrupted. 'I said I'd buy the drinks. Send up three whiskeys to Mr. McTrouville's room.'

"We turned and went upstairs. Mac's room was on the third floor front. As we came to the head of the stairs we saw his door one-third opened. The electric light was going brightly inside. Fergus whispered melodramatically and stepped on tiptoe. 'Hush! We now approach the poet in his lair! Sssh!'

"I pushed the door farther open and we walked in. A center table had been pulled out into the middle of the room and its cover removed. Upon the bare wood lay a solitary sheet of paper. The chair at which he had sat had been overturned. A lead pencil lay where it had been thrown on the floor. Upon the bed sprawled the prostrate form of McTrouville, clad in its immaculate dinner clothes, helpless, inert, snoring. The reek of whiskey filled every corner of the little room. Fergus picked up the paper and read it." The old man turned abruptly to the harsh little man with the goatee. "What did you read?"

The harsh little man answered in a dry tone, as if describing a map: "The first line was fairly firmly written. It ran straight across the page and contained the words:

Oh, the years—the years—the years.

The second line was written across the middle of the page in a more shaky hand. It read:

Oh, the years—the years—

The third line, almost running off the paper at the bottom, was so poorly scrawled as to be almost illegible. It simply ran.

Oh, the years!"

They looked at each other; then both turned

to me. The older man resumed: "We switched out the light and left the room. As we came downstairs we met the boy bringing up the three glasses of whiskey."

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JOSEPHSON

He was a little rat-like man with a sort of limpid fear in his face. He seemed at the same time awry and dried, a very sad rag that had been thoroughly wrung. And he was half asleep; and kept mumbling over and over, "I wonder . . . I wonder."

Now, I am not going to tell you where this happened, except so far as to say it was in a Press Club where newspaper men and dramatists and critics and the palaverers on perishable things came and gathered and went. But if you will take a compass and jab one leg of it into New York and swing the other within six hours of New York, the town will lie within your circle.

He kept on saying: "I wonder . . . I wonder about myself . . . maybe I . . . I wonder;" and he screwed up one eye at me and took me in. There was calmness about his alcoholic survey, as if he carefully sought an effect. There was also a limp garrulousness about his mouth. He seemed a sensitive man who set much store by his choice of words and confoundedly little by his choice of deeds. Of course he must have been a newspaper man of some sort, or he would not have been at this club. I had a look at him,

put a dry cigar into my mouth, took "The Hound of Heaven" out of my pocket, and sat down to read.

An important waiter came with a match box. "I wonder . . . I wonder . . . maybe that's my fm-m-m-m—" He said something indistinctly, something that I could not quite catch.

"'E always is that way," whispered the waiter, to my eyebrows of inquiry. "Name's Josephson, sir."

"I wonder . . . probably me, too . . . maybe it'll be the same way with my fm-m-m-m," wobbled the thin, maudlin voice behind my shoulder.

I laid Thompson aside and wheeled around. "Say, tell me," I said. Then waited. "Huh?"

He screwed up his left eye again.

"Yes—me," I went on and waited again.

His chin and hand trembled. It was one-thirty in the morning. "You want to hear?"

I nodded and called the waiter. "Give Mr. Josephson a drink."

He drew himself up with an epileptic movement, as a pantomimist in a cinematograph, and poured himself a glass against which his teeth chattered.

"You have the advantage of me. I see you know my name. Maybe you know my story, too?" He ran his thin fingers to his cheekbone

and licked his lips, weakly. "Most of 'em do. They come and sit here; and I, I tell it to them over and over again."

The strong electric light in the room beat down on him hotly; the chemicals in it seemed to suck the color out of him, taking along his nerve and his muscle and his blood. He blinked and it made me think of something in a cellar. But I waved my hand cheerily, and he went on:

"Well, you don't know me. You know my name, but you don't know where I came from. And I don't propose to tell you; and you won't find out, because a man can come from anywhere to this town. I'm a genius. I'm a newspaper genius . . . without any backbone. I guess that sounds cowardly, don't it? That sounds cowardly. Very well. That sounds cowardly. But I am not going to apologize for what I did. It's done, and what's done's done. And I may be a coward, but I admit—you heard me say I admit?"—he nodded his head emphatically—"what I did." Again he drew his thin shoulders up and gazed at me with superfluous earnestness. "No backbone—but I admit what I've done," he commented.

"Some fellows dig at a story. I've always faked. Came natural to me, anyway, and I'm a genius, . . . and so I always faked my stuff. You've heard newspaper men brag about them—

selves, just like actors, I suppose? Well you won't hear it to-night. I'm drunk. And I'm through . . . almost through. I can write leads, that's all. I always could write good leads, human-interest dope . . . 'man-on-the-street' . . . anything except the facts. Look at me! Don't ever fake your stuff. That is, it's all right once in a while, but not week in and week out. It don't go. They get wise to you. Nothing on earth wiser than a city editor . . . is there? Is there? I guess you'd say no. But you haven't heard what I did. No. You haven't listened to me . . . Josephson. Pardon me." He poured himself another drink.

"There was a senator in our city—United States senator—and he was about to die. I had the hotel run. It was easy. And you know how a fellow gets when he's got a job that's easy. He . . . he takes liberties with himself. I loafed and did a lot of other things, some of which you'll hear about in a few minutes. Principally, I loafed. I loafed because I knew everybody, and when I was too 'tired' "—here he winked with effort—"or busy about something else, or wanted to sit in at a little game, I'd just pipe off the visitors in town I happened to know, fix it with 'em, and fake stuff about 'em.

The city editor went home about eleven. I turned my stuff in to Ward. Remember that,

will you? . . . Ward. All O. K. Lemme see—where was I? . . . Oh, yes! There was a senator in our town, and he was about to die.

"The man on the city desk was a red-headed Irishman named Flanagan. He used to have heart trouble, I 'member . . . gastritis . . . kept a box of baking-soda in his top drawer and used to eat it with a spoon. Does this bore you? Am I boring you? Tell me, friend, if I bore you. All right. Flanagan says to me, right at the beginning . . . he says: 'Josephson, stay on Bellows. Whatever you do, cover that.' . . . Bellows was the senator, y'know, that was about to kick the bucket. I said, 'Sure . . . all right.' Every few days he'd tell me, 'Don't forget the Bellows assignment, Mr. Josephson.' And I'd answer him, 'Sure.' I went on that way for about a week. We had the obituary all framed up, cut, black-rule, and all . . . just waiting. All I had to write was a couple of sticks of lead. Seems easy, don't it?" His fingers ran deftly around his glass and he lowered his eyes. "Seems a mighty little thing, don't it, when you look at it now? I'm damned if it don't . . . almost nothing. Almost nothing."

He licked his lips and waited. I waited. He sat quiet.

Finally I said, "Huh?"

" . . . Ward—I told you about Ward. He

was a tall, skinny guy . . . bald-head . . . near-sighted. He was about forty—over forty, I guess. He'd come on the paper when he was a kid and had been there ever since. But he just naturally wasn't a newspaper man, that's all . . . you know the kind. They let 'em handle exchanges and get up the literary page on Sunday . . . you know the kind. He wasn't wise to anything. Simple, purblind, helpless as an owl. Half the time he didn't know what the boys were talking about, because he wasn't up on their slang. He went around behind his specks like a toad in a hole. He didn't know there was another paper on earth, he'd been there so long; and he was the only man in the place that dared to call the chief 'Charlie.' Ward got forty dollars a week. He had a wife and two children; lived 'way out in the suburbs somewhere. It was a long ride from the shop out to his house, down to work and back, and he used to lose sleep; so he slept now and then in his chair at the office . . . Now and then, did I say? Almost regular. I remember he used to sit in the city editor's chair and throw his head back and snore. When he did that his Adam's apple stuck out sort o' grotesquely, for he had an Adam's apple like a fish's back. He was a sick, nervous man; drank a food coffee."

Then something incongruously comic hap-

pened—something quite indecent. Josephson began weeping . . . sobbing with a sort of fierce pathos, as a man horribly compelled. He wiped his wavering knuckles around his eyes.

"I had no idea there was so much misery in a food coffee," I said, with a laugh.

But there was no resentment in Josephson. He looked at me pitifully and said: "You don't understand. Wait a minute." He nodded at me meaningly.

I nodded.

"You see, Flanagan got his paper pretty well made up and went home every night about eleven. Then this fellow Ward used to take the city desk until the presses started. Then he went home." He licked his lips, poured himself another drink, and breathed at me huskily, his eyes dilated, his nervous hand half extended toward mine. "Bellows died."

He went back over it again: "Bellows died." The excitement of a dozen years came out with the words—a subtle, fearful human excitement, stirring him like a poison. He could not keep, did not try to keep, his shocking frenzy out of his voice. His little shoulders twitched; his tongue ran lightly along his lip from corner to corner; he burned as if he had whispered a miracle.

"Damn it . . . you see . . . Bellows died."

Then his mouth performed a horrible smirk and he threw up his hands as a Frenchman would. He seemed to take it for granted that I understood what that meant, that abrupt, mystic shrug of his hands. He seemed to take it for granted that he and I were cronies, full of a mutual wisdom. It was some tacit secret, patent to us, utterly unintelligible to the outside world . . . Bellows had died!

I looked into his watery eyes noncommittally. The smirk seemed pasted onto Josephson's face. For a moment I thought him idiotic, out of his head, and reveling in a mild mystery. Then he screwed up his eyes and said to me out of the corner of his mouth, in a bitter, slangy fashion:

"Where do you suppose I was when I found it out? Huh, friend? On the level, where do you suppose I was when I found it out? I was standing in the side entrance of a cafe at half-past one in the morning—and I read it in a first edition of another paper." He nodded, almost proudly. "That's where I was . . . been bumming . . . some theatrical friends of mine." He nodded again. "Wasn't that abominable?" he asked, smiling with the expression of a man who has been chewing a bitter weed.

Then, all at once, his features flamed up with excitement. It seemed a new excitement, not the other, not warmed over. It seemed as if Jo-

sephson went back bodily to that former situation. His eyes glowed and his speech cleared.

"Half-past one—and in another paper. That very night Flanagan had warned me. He had left early, and Ward had gone on early. I called a cab and went lickety-split for the shop. I crept in on tiptoe, scared to death. It was dark in there. The city room was lighted by only two drop lights. The rest were out . . . Nobody in the place! Flanagan's desk was in a little room no bigger than a cubby-hole, right off the city room to the left—just before you go into the telegrapher's room. I was edging along as softly as I could on my toes, when all of a sudden I heard a slight rustle. I jumped, but my heart stood still. Then I saw. A window was open a little from the bottom, and the breeze had rustled through a few loose papers. That was all—so I sneaked up to the door and peeked in. Ward was there . . . asleep! Asleep as usual. Papers were all over the desk in front of him. The drop-light was on, but his face was thrown back in the shadow. I almost choked. Once I thought his eyes opened and he looked at me. But he didn't. He slept. I kept standing there, looking at him for a long, long time. I must have been fascinated. My nerves were shaking like strings, and for a minute or two—maybe three minutes—I had to stand there and just

look at him. Then I tip-toed back to the far end of the room to my desk and scribbled my lead to the obituary. You couldn't hear a single, solitary sound in that whole building except my pencil scratching . . . and it was a very soft pencil, too, I remember. I jumped once more when a window-shade flapped. I couldn't have felt more frightened if I had been robbing a safe! Then I sneaked back and looked in. Ward was still asleep. I came up easy . . . easy . . . soft as a cat alongside of him, without making a noise. I moved a few pieces of copy-paper that had some writing on it. Just over in the corner, they were. What did I do? Honest to God, although I'd planned it all out as I came up the stairs, I hardly knew what I was doing! . . . I slipped my story under 'em, just the least bit. Some of it stuck out where you could see it. Ward never moved.

"I got out of the room. The sweat was rolling off me when I sprang into the hall. When I reached the outside door I ran down the steps. I felt as if I was in a nightmare. When I reached the air I ran to the nearest saloon." Josephson stopped.

Again I took it for granted that words were unnecessary between us. But this time he did not smirk. He seemed, instead, to slump off into a pensive melancholy. He looked at his long

finger nails and began doing fancy, dainty offices about them. He picked lint from his clothes with his uncertain fingers, in intense concern.

"Yes?" I said, as a bridge over the gap.

He screwed up his eye and nodded. "Living, breathing hell broke loose the next morning . . . of course. But I stuck to my story. I didn't say he was asleep. I didn't need to say he was asleep . . . see?—'I turned in my story a little before twelve.' That's all. Then they fumbled around among the papers on the desk and found it there . . . of course.

"When Ward came down he'd already seep the Gazette and the Leader—the other two papers—and he knew. And when they showed him my story on his desk . . . yes he knew that time, too. The whole thing. What I'd done, and all. He didn't say anything, though. He just went red and closed his face. They panned him good and hard for losing the story; everybody, from the Old Man on down, roasted him. And he took it. He'd been on the paper fifteen years and never made a mistake before. One of those exact, scrupulous, 'faithful dog' old fixtures around the place. In one way he didn't know how to take it. He could have thrown it off. He could have promised. He could have kidded back at the boys. If he just hadn't closed his mouth and sat there and let it all sink in—

all that bitter miserable stuff! Couldn't he? Couldn't he? But what's the use! He wasn't that kind. He was some other kind . . . the kind of fellow that kept his scissors on that nail, and his paste-pot there, and his pile of exchanges just here, and his pen-points in this little box, and his coat-hanger on that hook . . . and so on. Hell, it seems like a little thing, don't it? Simply a—a trivial incident . . . something that any newspaper man . . . any newspaper office . . . could easily do, and get over, and forget. Worse things have certainly happened. But the way they handed it to this guy was something fierce. Everybody around the shop came around and stuck the gaff into him and broke it off. They didn't know at the time what they were doing. They didn't know anything about this man's people, or what kind of a home he had, or this man's life outside of the office. Some of them didn't even know he had a wife and children! You see, a good many of the boys were new men. And I had to watch 'em do it. Of course. Of course, I did.

"He got to be the office joke. They found that they could aggravate him; so it got to be part of the day's fun to stroll around past his desk and throw the harpoon into him. One of the guys brought up a big poster, 'Asleep at the Switch,' and set it on his desk one morn-

ing. He began to go about his work as if he was nervous about it. See? I . . . I watched him . . . very, very closely. I used to sit and watch him. He'd make little mistakes, and they'd get past him . . . little things that in the old days would have been corrected, you know, and nothing thought of it. It wasn't that way now. He'd come up all sick and moist . . . he'd stutter and mumble apologies. His hand would shake when he took back a piece of his copy to make the corrections. He had never been a proud man. Now his humility was sickening . . . almost degrading. Sometimes it was a little thing like an initial wrong; and the city editor would get sore over it, and yell at him the office rule about the importance of correct initials.

"I know it, Ed,' he would say.

"Of course you do. But you're dead on your feet. What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"It went on that way for a couple of months, one thing and another, slow but sure. Out at his home he must have had trouble. He didn't look like a man who was getting pleasure out of his home. I remember every Saturday in the old days he used to bring his kids down to the office. But now he didn't any more.

"They reduced his pay to thirty a week . . . then to twenty-five. He used to rush at his

stuff in a sort of frenzy; then he'd sit for an hour afterward, going over it line by line like a book-keeper, seeing if he could find his own mistakes before anybody else caught them and called his attention to them. You know how a fellow gets, that way. He worked longer than anybody else. He got down early in the morning and stayed at it all day and half the night. . . . He didn't sleep any more. I used to sit and watch him." Josephson's little intricate mind went hunting for details like a ferret.

"Bill collectors came to the office, looking for him—a thing they'd never done before. He had always kept his accounts as straight as a pin, I imagine. One day it was the insurance collector, and he came a good many times. Finally he gave it up.

"What went on in his mind I don't know. I imagine it finally got so it was just a general sort of bewilderment—newspaper work all mixed up with wife and kids and bills and mistakes and his sick stomach. If he'd only been a drinking man, like me, it might have been different. But he wasn't. Instead, he'd take half-days off for long walks in the open air. When he'd ask for these, Flanagan would say: 'Oh, yes, go ahead. It don't make much difference anyway, I suppose; Josephson or Gray can do your work, if there is any.' And Ward would

mumble something to himself and smile in a sort of sickly fashion.

"One day one of the boys came in and said something around the office about seeing Ward's wife 'demonstrating a new tea in a department store. Thank God, nobody told Ward about our knowing it! I—I looked her up . . . some time afterward . . . and found her working in a laundry. Yes, at a mangle in a laundry, two years ago. Lemme see . . . where was I? Oh, yes!

"His eyes got so they used to stare and stare and stare. They weren't drowsy any more. He would sit and stare at a piece of blank copy-paper by the hour as if it were something absolutely new and . . . and abnormal. The one thing, I imagine, that kept him going about his work was a kind of sweating frenzy of . . . fear. Fear that he would make mistakes. Fear that his editors would jump onto them before he did. Fear that his nerve was broken. Fear, by God, that he himself was . . . afraid!"

Josephson poured himself a drink. His voice took on a matter-of-fact tone.

"That went on nine months. See? Nine months. One night this man Ward stepped over to Flanagan's desk and said in an ordinary way:

"'Let me have a sheet or two of paper will you, Ed?"

"He got it and went back to his own desk and wrote something. He folded it up and put it under Flanagan's paper-weight. Then he went out to the lavatory and killed himself with a revolver.

" . . . Afterward Flanagan read the note: " 'I can't stand this. One of you fellows will know why.' "

Josephson looked at me with a certain intrepid hardness in his weak face, his one eye screwed up tight, the other searching me insistently, as if after a verdict, an opinion, an expression, an exclamation. I did not move. The hot chemical electric blaze sucked away at him avidly till he moved before my eyes, impressionistically, as a thing of paint. For one queer moment it seemed a monstrous impossibility that he was alive. Then he thrust his face closer and whispered:

"That happened ten years ago. See?" He affirmed with his head. "Ten years. Now . . . I'm getting so . . . as the years go by . . . thinking of Mrs. Ward in that laundry, and of Ward . . . and of what I did . . . and of what he did . . . I wonder . . . I wonder if that won't be my finish, too! Too!" He broke off, his eyes heedless of the insignificant room, ignoring me completely. His little trembling hand crept up mechanically and felt of his thin lips. He mumbled, half aloud, and all unconsciously: "I

wonder . . . I wonder . . . if that won't be the way I fm-m-m-m . . . "

I sat back entranced, mesmerized, fascinated at his fate. Then I reflected, and spoke.

"Yes, it will. You're not a man—you're a baby, Josephson."

He came back to me. "I'm a baby," he repeated mechanically, pathetically. "I'm a baby. A good many of us are babies, even after we're supposed to be grown up. And what in God's name, are you going to do with us? For us? Tell me."

A SISTER OF SHALOTT

The mirror cracked from side to side:

"The curse is come upon me," cried

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

SHE may have been named Clara because of her eyes, which were clear and steady. They were startling with their youngness, for they looked out from an old and tired face. Each weary hour of the day and night had drawn its wrinkled line about her mouth, about her eyes, across her forehead. And she was only thirty-two. She looked ten years older.

In that soft New England spring up among those beautiful hills with their vistas into green dream-lands it seemed remarkable that there should be hundreds and hundreds of such farm drudges as Clara; wrinkled young women with either bitter or leaden hearts; going from task to task with half-bowed heads; suffering in body from fugitive or chronic ailments; suffering in mind from the solitude, from the inability to think outside a certain dull round of thoughts.

The city women, motoring up through those sweet-scented roads, would stop and cry out delightedly: "Oh, look at that dear little place!" and Clara would reflect to herself that it was indeed

dear—it had cost her every dream she once had had. They went on their way, rolling over other hills into fresh surprises. Clara went on hers, to boil out the milk-pans, churn, and scrub before getting dinner for John and the “hand.”

She had been married for fifteen years. Her first two children had died. She now had a little boy five years old, a nag, a tease, a torment to whatever good nature was left her. Yet, of course, she loved him; and she loved her husband. But the boy would grow up and go away—and then what? The long stretch of painful, dull years ahead of her would be even worse than those she had already gone through. Her husband subscribed for a rural weekly paper and in this paper there was a department “devoted to women.” The person who edited this department was very fond of poetry and felt that quotations of verse were an aid in brightening the lives of farm women. Clara had read this doggerel, of course. And one line out of it all kept dinning in her ears:

Life is really what you make it.

She had thought back sixteen years to the time when, as Clara Hendricks, she had been the beauty of the town. It was all a confused jumble now, of moonlight rides, dances, kissing games, singing old songs. Life is really what you make it! Before her father died he had wanted to see her “happy.” She had wanted to go to the big city, learn to be a

nurse, see the world, maybe even get on a ship and make a trip somewhere. She had always longed for that magnificent experience. When the boys, in the moonlight, used to sing "Good Night, Ladies" to her and reached the words:

Merrily we bowl along, o'er the deep blue sea,

it used to send a thrill through her. Some day she would go on a ship, maybe clear across the ocean.

"That is romantic nonsense," said her father. "You mustn't think of going to the city alone. It would be safer and better to marry right at home and settle down."

He grew worse, bed-ridden, pleaded with her. So she gave it all up to please him and she married John Cramm, mostly because her father wanted her to. A good husband; a good match. Eight years later she had two weeks free from the farm, absolutely free to do as she liked. She visited an old aunt in New York. She saw the crowds and the theatres; had a miraculous time. When she came home she found the place a mess. So she got up an hour earlier every morning—at four o'clock instead of at five—and worked until after dark until she had got the place back to its former neatness. That was the only vacation she had had in fifteen years.

It was one of her duties every Friday morning to drive to town, nine miles away, with a week's

supply of butter, eggs, chickens and, in season, fresh vegetables for certain customers who depended upon her for these things. The chicken-money and egg-money were hers. It amounted to two hundred dollars a year.

This particular Friday there was to be a Y. M. C. A. "social" in town—an affair at which cakes and ice cream and lemonade were sold, the proceeds to be used toward erecting a new building. By a circular, she had been invited to attend, as was everybody in the country for miles around. Most of the women would not go because they begrudged the spending of the thirty or forty cents for such fripperies; but Clara had learned from that curiously idle but pointed gossip of the countryside that a number of women further down the road really were going to be there. In quite a little fever of reawakened femininity she resolved to go.

So, having made sure that all her stock of produce was safely stowed away in the buggy, having harnessed and hitched up the horse and tied him to a post, she dashed back into the house to do a curious thing.

A very curious thing.

Upstairs she ran, into her own room—stood before the looking-glass of her bureau, jerked open a drawer with hurried fingers, searched for a round china box, very small, hastily took off its top,

dabbed a handkerchief into it and began to rub her cheeks briskly. Clara thought it was rouge. It had been left there several years before by a young woman, a summer boarder from the city. But actually the stuff was a rose madder paste for the finger nails. The effect was grotesque—and, as with so much that is grotesque in life, underneath the grotesqueness there ran a piteous irony.

Clara, oblivious of the rest of herself; of the dull costume that was to go with this display; of the sorry horse and the old buggy; of her coarse, thick shoes and old-fashioned hat, gave all her attention to her hard little cheeks, cheeks through which the bones were already beginning to reveal the *memento mori* of the skull, cheeks which had been neglected for too many years—all this to be conquered now, wiped out, banished by a few minutes rubbing with a magic paste. She had got the notion on that New York trip of long ago. She looked in the glass and was pleased with herself. Why? Was it lack of taste? Perhaps. Perhaps, too, the hope that hungers overlong is not too particular where it comes to be assuaged.

With her rough hands she clumsily powdered her wrinkled brown skin; powdered her brow and her nose and her chin and her neck. The effect was ghastly. She dressed her thin hair differently, fluffing it up above her forehead where usually she parted it flat. While she had been in New York

she had bought some cheap puffs. She had been ashamed of her own dull hair; had wanted to imitate the young city girls—but had never dared. Now, however, she even stuck on these tawdry things, obviously of a different color from the rest of her hair. She put on a little lace collar and fastened it with a vulgar glass brooch—a horse's head in imitation silver, embalmed forever in a vitreous lump the size of a pullet's egg. She drew on some white cotton gloves, slipped out of the house and started. John had not seen her.

Fortunately the wind and sun, during the long nine-mile drive, did much to soften the horrible gaudiness of her face. She perspired partly from the heat of the sun, partly from the heat of her own heart; and as she perspired she wiped her face again and again. More than half the stuff came off onto her handkerchiefs. The nag, a huge elephant-footed, broken-down work horse, plodded slowly along, taking his time.

Her thoughts were whirling. Never in her life had Clara dared do such a thing, and the blood pounded in her veins with the pleasure of her own boldness. The very air around her seemed full of glee with her at her adventure. She drove through country roads of greening birches and alders, past orchards of apple bloom singing under the persuasive sun—or so it seemed to her, for the trees were full of bees. Whenever she felt she might re-

pent of her rashness, a cat-bird near by would break out and thrash the air happily or a bluejay whistle from a hillside: it sounded like hurrahing. Above all, like unaccustomed wine, the sense of pleasure, the glowing sense of pleasure flowed through her. She had not felt such harmony with the spring since her girlhood. Spring usually meant to her only house-cleaning and garden planting.

Other women, with brisker horses, passed her going toward town. She nodded to them and smiled. To herself she thought: Aren't they old and grimy and sour-looking? Why, even the animals, the cows in the fields, look fresher and prettier!

But each grim drudge as she passed saw with an inward shock the appearance Clara made and jogged on to carry the scandal into the village: to the butcher shops, fish shops, grocery stores where they traded, to the homes wherein they sold their produce, to the other women who would be at the "social."

The town was made of a gaping, idle, sidewalk-shuffling lot of people who scratched their heads a good deal over everybody else's affairs and just barely managed to negotiate their own. Their minds were the usual mean provincial minds, their traits hypocritical and sly. Not having much news to talk over made them all inveterate gossipers. Where much is happening little is said. And the

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reverse is true. Men-tattlers were as bad as the women-tattlers. They tattled in the saloons, in the railroad-station, in the barber-shops, on the street corners; they even left their stores to go into other men's stores and pass on a bit of scandal. So many of them had grudges against so many others of them that the tangle of petty spites could not possibly be unraveled. Although each of them cheated and lied as much as he dared, it galled him to have anyone do the same to him. They had no use for the Golden Rule, any way you take it.

When Clara came down the dusty main street the idle shopkeepers and loungers were already prepared to gape at her. Curiously enough, the attention really pleased her. And curiously, too, she really did look quite pretty. Her eyes shone brightly and she carried herself as if she were young again.

She made her rounds and then tied up the horse at a feed-rack. After she had given him his oats, she went to the "social."

Farm women and town women mingled in a motley crowd. The most outlandish styles of garments, some of them so old they were almost the fashion again, startled the beholder. Hats of every shape, size and color—from rusty black bonnets, which looked as if they were made of vulcanized rubber, on up to the latest wide-trimmed straws with great streamers of red ribbon—nodded and bobbed and

fell askew to the right, or askew to the left, or at times straight backward off of ancient scalps unused to much adornment. A carnival could not have produced a harsher clash of colors. As far as Clara's costume was concerned, she was real no worse than plenty of the others. Yet every woman there made it a point to step up close to Clara, either to engage her in conversation or to observe her face to face.

Because she had her cheeks painted!

And the report of that spread and spread—not to the whole town, but to that part of the town which knew her. That, however, was to Clara the whole town. The whole world to each of us is but that portion of the world which we happen to touch.

She did not know at that time of this havoc of her reputation. For one long day she enjoyed immensely the rather tedious amusements of the place. Finally at four o'clock, later than she should have been, she started for home.

Up through the cooling hills the old horse plodded, slowly dragging the tired but happy woman. Clara leaned back and indulged in a quiet, retrospective dream. The old days sent up mirage after mirage before her. When she passed the schoolhouse, now fallen into disuse, she remembered how Ed Finlan and Ross Fister used to steal sheep's nose apples from Talbot's hill and bring them to

her, bashful beau fashion. When she passed the mill-pond, she remembered the skating—how pretty she used to look in her furs; how, that time she sprained her ankle, Ross Fister had carried her almost a quarter of a mile to the sleigh. She passed a load of hay going to town and it recalled to her the hay-rides in the soft moonlit nights of her girlhood and the sweet voices singing "My Old Kentucky Home." She half-closed her eyes and hummed

About an eighth of a mile from the cross-roads store, and about two miles from her home, she saw a man leisurely strolling along. It was Ross Fister. Ross had turned out to be a no-account idler, one of those creatures so common to the countryside: strong, able to do a long, hard day's work; good-natured, bright, cheerful; but lazy, given to drinking too much hard cider; working two or three days, then laying off; living in a tumble-down shack back on an unused log-road; cooking his own meals; simply wandering through life, sufficient unto each day.

He looked back, saw her coming, recognized her by that horse—a notorious local fossil—and bent down to pluck some marsh marigold by the roadside.

When she came up, he grinned and said:

"Hello, Clara. Give me a lift."

She stopped and, just as he clambered in, she

regretted her action. She saw that he had been drinking more than usual. But it was too late. She clucked to the horse and they started ahead.

"How far are you going?" she asked.

"Just to the store."

She felt relieved.

Silence.

"I p-picked you a bokay, Clara." He handed her the little yellow flowers.

"Thanks, Ross." She took them with her disengaged hand and thrust them into her belt.

"Just like old times, Clara. J-just like—like old times."

Silence.

He turned to stare straight at her. "My! But you do look pretty to-day, Clara." He leaned closer. "My! But you *do* look pretty."

She bit her lip and gazed straight ahead, inwardly cursing her folly for letting him into the buggy.

"You look so pretty that I'd—I'd like to kiss you." He grabbed her fiercely, all the good humor gone. "And I *will* kiss you."

"Ross!" she screamed.

But he kissed her full on the lips.

"You dirty—you—"

The struggle in the buggy was determined, abrupt. She dropped the reins and dealt him a blow in the face with her fist. Small as she was, Clara was strong. She twisted, writhed, got her elbow

under his chin. With a quick tug, she threw him—threw him half out of the seat, his body across the wheel.

Then an amazing thing happened. The fossil horse came to life. Frightened out of its wits, it plunged forward at a gallop, throwing the man into the middle of the dusty road; and the faster its speed, the faster its fright drove it. The reins were whirling along over its back, under its hoofs. Clara, under ordinary circumstances, would have regained control of the animal. But the suddenness and the shock, the rocking buggy and the terror-stricken flight, were all too much for her. She clung to the dashboard, on her knees, and screamed at the top of her voice.

Rounding a bend, the runaway approached the cross-roads store. Half a dozen men were out in the road. Women and children on the step gazed with enormous eyes.

At sight of the men, the old nag abruptly stopped. Clara was pitched out, helped up.

Voices raised a clamor of questioning. And before she thought, in fury and in fear she burst out:

"That dirty Ross Fister kissed me—the horse—ran away—" She began sobbing and sat down on the step, dusty, bruised, her hat awry, two false puffs dangling loose, the ghastly paint on her cheeks showing cruelly clear.

The men and women looked at each other. Cal-

culatation crept around in tiny lines over their eyelids. One old woman—a notorious scandal-monger—pursed up her wry lips and said: “Um-hm.”

Clara sat still, arranging her dress and hat as best she could. The crowd was silent. Finally, she dabbed her eyes with one of her tell-tale handkerchiefs and said, as calmly as she could:

“I must get home. Will some one please hold the horse—and—help me in? I—I think I’ve sprained my ankle.”

As she drove slowly away, she heard a nasty female voice which had presumed she was beyond earshot. It said: “Served her right—the painted Jezebel.”

The last mile and a half was a lurid journey. She knew that in all her world there was not one single voice of sympathy, of understanding. She knew that before the eyes of her world she stood robbed of that one false yet priceless asset—her “character.”

No matter how good a woman she was under her skin, the public aspect of her character was bad. And her public was her life. There was no appeal for her beyond the little circle that she knew. And in that little circle there was not a one who would not condemn her actions throughout all that silly, tragic day. The nasty thought which comes at least once to all of us who have been wronged in men’s eyes—the thought that life is ac-

tually not worth living—kept recurring again and again in Clara's brain.

And see how it all had happened! she thought. 'Through no fault of her own. Absolutely through no fault of her own. She had fixed herself up simply out of a childish, and a womanly, desire to look pretty once more. Silly it may have been, but nothing criminal in it. She had picked up Fister out of the most ordinary motives of kindness—of custom, even. Men and women were always giving one another a lift along that road. How could she know what the dirty cur was going to do?

Thus her thoughts marched. When she was not cold with fear at her being dropped by everybody, she was burning with rage at the stupidity of it all—of the people, of their attitude, of the way in which her loss of "character" came about. And now, in addition, she had to meet her husband.

He was waiting for her at the gate, because of the lateness of the hour. Six o'clock; and the milk to be separated and the cream stowed away.

"What kept ye so late?" he boomed at her morosely.

She refused to answer; threw him the reins; clambered down stiffly and limped into the house. At the kitchen door she saw her little boy and the sight broke down her resolve to be matter-of-fact. She lost control of herself, tottered into a chair and began crying with long, low wails. She gouged

into her streaming eyes with that absurd handkerchief.

While he was putting up the horse her husband knew that something had gone wrong.

He came in brusquely. "*What* in the nation's the matter?" he snarled.

Like so many so-called good men in this world, John Cramm was merely a solemn stick; a bigot in his family, an ineffectual specimen in the outside world of men. He was tall, dark, rather weak, with a bent toward melancholy, apt to whimper when he could not gain his point any other way. He was strong on what he called "duty," and he considered that he was thoroughly doing his duty by life when he put in a long, plodding day on his farm. He sometimes cultivated his corn an extra time or two so as to give more than his full measure of duty.

He was of that worst type of disciplinarian: the disciplinarian with a slack jaw. He was religious with a religion that came from accustomed Sunday worship, not from closet thinking or the faith that is born in the solitude of the heart. He loved his wife; he loved his child. That is, he *had* loved them. But this feeling had gradually taken rank along with the other strict and sensible feelings which he held. He loved orderliness on his farm, money in the bank, daily progress; he loved his decent position in the eyes of his world. So, natural-

ly, he loved his wife—in those terms. So many of the “good matches” which girls make are matches which belong to this sort. So many of the “good men” who are married are men of this sort.

Clara bent over, put her eyes down against her sleeve, and kept up the pitiful, long-drawn wailing.

“Well—what’s up?” demanded her husband, beligerently.

“Oh—oh—oh—” she sobbed. “I wish I was dead! I wish I was dead!” She drew out the last word with a sort of subdued shriek.

“What the mis—”

“I didn’t mean anything by it! I didn’t! I didn’t!” She raised her sodden, bloated face to him, her lips trembling with sorrow. “I didn’t mean *anything* by it, John! I don’t know how it all happened. I—I’m a good woman, John, and you know it; a good woman, and a good wife and a good mother—”

He was staring as if hypnotized, with his black, hollow eyes fixed on the handkerchief. “Good Heavens, Clara! What’s *that*? It ain’t blood?”

“P-paint. It’s face paint. And Ross Fister kissed me. And they’re all talking about it; and Jim ran away with me—I—Oh, my God! I wish I was dead.”

Her husband’s slack jaw dropped. He gazed at her stupidly, moistened his underlip with his tongue, tried to speak, swallowed with difficulty a

lump in his throat, moistened his tongue again; and then, with a characteristic gesture, he put his hands up into his hair and clutched his temples. Finally he said:

"Ross Fister and you—you painted your cheeks and went driving with him—didn't you go to town?—You?—My wife?—mother of my boy?—"

His goodness and his training were responsible for this calculation of what had happened.

"No!" she shouted. "No! And you know it." Then in gasps of breath she told him exactly what had happened. He remained standing, staring at her with melancholy eyes, one hand still clasped in an imbecile fashion in his hair. She remained sitting, pounding the table near her with her tightly clenched fist as she emphasized each point.

"Oh, this is awful," he said, once. And again, "Oh, this is awful."

When she had done he began monotonously in a mourning tone: "Oh, what'll people say about this! Oh, what'll people say!" After a bit he changed: "We'll never live this down—never—never—never! We'll never live this down!" Then: "How could you do it, Clara? How *could* you do it?" Then oracularly: "I knew that some day something would happen. I knew it! I just knew it."

His mind was wandering in around through the maze of the calamity. As yet it had found nothing to focus on and he was indulging merely in abstract

explosions of woe. The thought never occurred to either of them—or to anyone else, in fact—that he would hunt up Fister and thrash him. Anybody who knew the two men would have laughed at the idea.

She kept up her sobbing: "Oh . . . oh . . . oh . . . I wish I was dead . . . I wish I was dead . . ."

"*You*," he hissed suddenly. "You silly, brainless fool—you! An old woman like *you*—daubing her cheeks up—getting into a mess like this—ruining my life—making me the laugh of my friends, of everybody I know—My God! You useless, utterly worthless—yah! I don't know how to begin on *you*. I ought to leave you—make you leave me—get a divorce from you—oh, my God! and Robbie—a little boy having to grow up through all this—hearing it from the other boys—oh, my God, I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do! Think of me; think of my life. You've ruined me. Nothing could hurt me—hurt my standing—the way this will!"

She burst out like a mad woman: "I didn't mean any harm by what I did! What made me old—what made me an 'old woman,' as you call me? You and your miserable farm, and working myself until I dropped. I go all day long without having a soul to speak to, day in and day out. You come to your meals, mumble a little and go back to the fields again. I wish my mother was alive! Oh,

mother, mother, I wish you were alive to-night—I'd leave you, soon enough! *We'd* leave you—Robbie and I! I'm sick and tired of this farm and the town and the people. Oh, I'll go crazy up here! I know I'll go crazy up here!"

They glared at each other—he viciously morose, the martinet of his fireside, she beside herself with anguish, the lonely woman whom the world misjudged. During these later years they had got along without much conversation. They were used to silences, to appraising events without talking about them.

And as she faced him she kept thinking—even in the midst of her sorrow—bitterly to herself: "Well, I pleased my father. I married him and pleased my father. I am here. I didn't go to New York. And this is the end of all my attempts to please everybody."

"A fine mess you've made of things," he sneered. He stood looking at the toes of his boots. Now and then he shook his head, darkly, miserably. Finally he said, biting off each word slowly:

"You'd better get that cream separated. The cows have been milked over an hour."

She went stumbling, obedient, out into the kitchen, the foolish handkerchief still pressed against her mouth.

"Oh, I'll go crazy up here," she sobbed. "I know I'll go crazy."

Thereafter, as she drove to town, with bowed head, looking neither to right nor left, people said: "She's turned queer, ain't she?"

And other people answered, laughing harshly: "Well, yes. She had her fling once. Reckon it'll last her all her life."

THE WIND IN THE LILACS

It was about half past ten that night and Gampa was in the old garden, leaning back on his bench against the lilac-bush. He had a pipe between his teeth and all the smells of spring came sweetly to him, and the darkness seemed to creep and murmur about him.

There was a *slish* of quiet feet across the grass. "Gur-racious! I knew I'd find you here," whispered Ruth. "Ain't it lonesome and quiet, though?" There was a movement of an old hand toward the pipe. "Don't tell me to get back to bed, *ple-e-ease*, Gampa. I just couldn't sleep. So I slipped on my sweater and—and here I am."

Her great-grandfather blew out a very little smoke from his mouth:

"Ain't the wind soft, though?" he said. "I'm just waitin' for it to begin."

"Begin what?"

"Ssh! Listen hard; and ask it for a story. It'll tell you one. That's what I've been doin', Woof. I was just sittin' here, makin' up my old mind what to ask it. But—ssh! I'm going to let *you* ask it."

"No-o-o. *You!*"

"Nope. *You!* It's a—it's a privilege and a—a gift."

The sweater smuggled down against Gampa's arm, and two big round eyes started out from above it at the lisping, teeming blackness of the garden. Now when the Wind tells you a story, as you know, you must let it yarn along in its own way. Most people won't, of course; that is the reason the Wind tells so few stories to so few people. But the very old grandfathers and the very young children generally listen in just the right way, and the Wind consequently—well, it likes to talk to them, of course.

"*You* ask it, Woof."

The sweater smuggled a mite and then a solemn young voice whispered:

"Well, then, I ast it to tell somethin' about me when I've grown up . . . and somethin' about Mother, too."

You may not believe it, but she had hardly finished the "too" when the Wind slowly dropped and began saying something very soft and gentle that sounded like "*sibil . . . sibil . . . sibil*" and then, just as soothing as sleep, it began:

The Story That the Wind Told

It was early twilight in the Old Lady's room. Faint odors of spring lilac came through the

open bay windows to mingle with the fainter, rarer odor of old lavender. A sweetness seemed to come and go, from lawn to center table; and within the room every little, dainty thing breathed an antique fragrance, or smiled the smile of quiet age, or sighed an ancient song . . . The Aaron Willard clock, that came ninety odd years ago from Boston way, ticked behind its painted glass all the kindlier as the later years went by; the prim daguerreotype propped above the lace centerpiece took on a luminous gentleness in the dusk; the old French mirror gave back a dim poetry for everything which looked into it; the stark chest of drawers lined with bird's-eye maple . . .

Well, in that chest of drawers, in one of the compartments, half-open, lay a baby's hood all scattered over with dried rose leaves, where the Old Lady had taken it out and, carefully careless, replaced it again; a silk-and-lace hood, pricked neatly with a thin blue ribbon . . . and the breeze of nightfall, you may be sure, cuddled about this softly.

Even the marble mantelpiece beneath the clock was a thing of sentiment . . . faithful, stupid, servantlike sentiment, perhaps . . . but sentiment. It bore in fidelity its china shepherd and shepherdess, who smiled in a tricksy, china spright-

liness at the old *tête-à-tête* chair and the white silk shawl athwart it.

It was early twilight in the Old Lady's room . . . a June twilight that hung long in the heavens and smoothed the earth and the air, as reluctant to go as a young lover who has said "Good-night" and is holding the hand of his sweetheart . . . just such a night as this, only earlier. The old room and the old things in it felt the seductive lilacs. The mirror's face stirred with the sinking June. It was as if garden-ghosts, the placid ghosts of three generations, had rustled in through the big windows. Nothing began and nothing ended. The room and the garden, the garden and the room, floated lightly into each other like dew-mist into moonlight. Yet there was no fairy extravagance about this. It was something quieter, even duller. The sense was one of a light, nebulous passivity. It was more than that, even. It was . . . apathy! A kindly apathy.

The early twilight crept into the Old Lady's room as it had crept for countless Junes . . . at least, they seemed countless. But they were a hundred. Not that the Old Lady was as old as that. She was sixty-two. The Aaron Willard clock, shaped like a gilt banjo, upside down, could remember its ninety-fifth June in that room; the mirror, sweet-temperedly, its seven-

tieth; the baby's hood its fifty-sixth; the mantelpiece its hundredth. There is nothing so calm, so contained as the well-preserved old age of inanimate things, inanimate things which have been in contact with years of human fingers. Yet they make you gasp with a sudden quick sense of life . . . life glorious, charming, futile. . . . life relinquished, life erased. A breath from light young lips, fluttering before that mirror, had come as a miracle, a stupendous poetical miracle, and had as miraculously faded Whither? The mirror is there, fragile yet immortal, steeped in a benign and deity-like apathy.

In the Old Lady's room in the early twilight, stirred by the scent of new lilac, the things began talking, monotonously, as gods talk, telling ideas they already know.

The fresh Letter on the center table rustled out importantly and read itself with emphasis:

DEAREST MOTHER: Victory at last! The great building—*my* building—has been completed, inspected, passed—a success! I can hardly keep myself from shouting. "The most daring *tour de force* in all architecture," one writer has called it. At thirty-five I have justified myself to myself—and to you, to your patience, to your care of me.

I enclose one clipping . . . "the greatest builder of modern time," you see it names me. I am mentioned with Michaelangelo and Wren. The thing seems absurd, impossible . . . impossible that there should

be a distinct American style and that I should have planned it! And yet, you cannot conceive how away down in my heart I glory in it.

I've won! I've won! Betty says she knows you'll feel proud of me. You do, don't you? Of course, I know you do. Somehow, tired as I am, I feel strong enough to do anything now. And later I can, and will. This is just my beginning. After this I mean to go ahead to the greatest things a man ever planned.

You know, I used to complain at the dull years that kept going by one after the other without my accomplishing anything. Now I see that they were merely years of preparation, of getting myself ready for the big work that from now on I've got on my hands.

God bless you for all the care and worry you spent upon me! I never can repay you in the things of this world; only perhaps you may feel proud of your son to-day. I've got a little present for you that you shall have when we stop in to visit you. We are going to Europe for a short "convalescence." I wish you would write me and wish me good luck.

Your affectionate son,
CHARLES.

—"Oh, isn't that nice!" Ruth whispered.

—"Ssh!" said Gampa, with his hand over her mouth.

The twilight in the Old Lady's room did not deepen; it held itself like a caught breath. The sounding young words mellowed off into that languid, noble air and mixed at last with the limitless murmur of the garden and the mute fragrance of the rose leaves and lavender. The

old Clock ticked. The Mirror smiled. The Baby's Hood stirred gently with a rivulet of breeze and composed itself.

" . . . And she merely laid me down and went out for a drive!" mourned the Letter.

"As grass lays down a dead thing," ticked the Clock. "In all gentleness, and in all . . . serenity."

There was a pause like a low note of music. The tick-tick of the Clock seemed to be saying: "Think of the years" . . . "Think of the years" . . . "Think of the years."

"I cannot understand her apathy," the Letter insisted. "She seems soft, yet impassible. . . ."

"As the light is impassible," murmured the Mirror.

"You would think she would thrill with joy at her boy's success . . . her only boy and his inconceivable victory. Think how she must have nursed him and dreamed over him and fed him full of ideals! . . ."

"There are two kinds of ideals," interrupted the Clock.

"The ideals of fairies and the ideals of men," breathed the Lilacs.

"Men . . . men," ticked the Clock. "Think of the years" . . . "think of the years."

"Let me tell you something about myself," said the Baby's Hood. "I am an heirloom, a

little silken heirloom. For three generations in this house I have covered a baby's head. The last was his. Before that, hers. Before that, her mother's. I suppose I have heard more whispered beauty than any piece of silk on earth . . . beauty of which you would say it was appallingly incongruous to believe that it ever came from human lips. But it did. And I have heard it three times over, and many times in those three. I am not going to tell you what this beauty was. It would either terrify you or else make you laugh. It came as inexplicably as the warm sudden pulses of blood before childbirth; it came as ineffably as the tender pains. And it was always the same. In all true mothers it is the same.

"How shall I describe its coming? There is a flow of love and then . . . a whisper. That whisper is freighted with a beauty that is intangible, indefinable, inconceivable. It is so low that silence drowns it. It is so high that eternity hears it. It is so true that God weeps at it. It propounds the most awful wonder on all the earth; it sings a hope that is as ruthless as deity, it chants a nobility more terrible than the Holy Ghost.

"A mother, at her first-born nativity, is no longer a human being. She is a body in dissolution, and a spirit in flower. There are mo-

ments when she feels herself to be nothing . . . nothing . . . except an ambient essence. She hovers like a fragrance over this little creature . . . and the little creature melts like a miracle into air. Imperceptibly, they mingle. And she instils, instils, instils herself as if in some super-human dream. This is when the whisper of that beauty is passed between them.

"So . . . the mother whispers. There are things before earth was dreamed of in that whisper. Cosmic memories. Eternal purposes. Purity beyond all knowledge of purity. An ideal so sublime as to make men giddy, so fierce, so passionate as to be amazing. A spirit more awfully gentle than that which gave an eleventh commandment. Yet the whisper comes through a hue of roses and a scent as soft as spring. It comes as mildly as a muffled kiss, as faintly as a hosanna from another star. Somewhere, in a way she never knew, she suffers. Her passion is supernal, as supernal as the passion which conceived the systems of suns. A glory that makes glory inglorious suffuses her soul . . . and this is the glory that passes into her whisperings. For the first time in her life *she is not dumb*. And what she speaks transcends herself, almost terrifies her . . . would terrify her, but that she is so sure, so dominant, so omniscient in these moments. In humility she radiates.

Certain seconds pass like ages, in which she breathes a blithe eternal message.

"You cannot conceive these things? Yet these are the things I have heard.

—"Was that the way of Mother and me, Gampa . . . the way the Hood says?" Ruth asked.

—"Ssh! It will go on," her grandfather replied.

And the old Clock ticked: "Men . . . Men" "Think of the years . . . think of the years." The somber charm of the old room deepened. Each bit of experienced furniture accepted the words with a quiet smile, such a smile as would be on the Old Lady's face as she stooped in the garden to smell a flower. This beauty the Hood told about, whatever it was, was beyond them . . . like philosophers, they smiled at each other, almost nodding their contemplative heads in that brooding, affectionate dusk. It is true of old people that when they cannot comprehend, they wrap themselves in an attitude of abiding patience. And they do likewise when they can comprehend.

"The Letter has wondered at our Lady's apathy; the Hood has recited about an ineffable beauty and a beauty before that and a beauty before that . . . ever receding, ever recurring."

spoke the Mantel, calmly . . . with an incongruous calm beneath the fixed, absolute coquetry of the shepherdess. "The Hood has spoken of mysteries beyond the world. How shall we strike the balance, fill the equation? It is very hard. I sometimes think we do not know truths. We know only facts. But what we know we know. A man is not a thing of dreams. He is of a devious but practical business. He sickens through acts to consequences . . ."

"All men, all women . . . always," smiled the imperturbable Mirror. "All sick."

The definite, calculating Clock took it up. "The beauty fades. *He* grows . . . do you follow me? . . . away from the fairy toward the philosopher. Away from what his mother intended him to what the world expects him to become. Away from the dream toward the business. Conceive the child! . . . born in a wave of God, endowed in a glamour. Conceive the swift transcendency of the mother's spirit! and then conceive what happens . . . what always happens . . ."

"Dust, dust, dust. Dust in the mouth, dust on the flower," murmured the Lilacs.

—"I remember," said the Mantel, "a story that a teapot told me once: a blue china teapot that used to sit on my shoulder. *She* had it from another teapot who had it from still another, a Danish teapot whose mother and grand-

mother both lived in Copenhagen. It was—let me see—to that grandmother-teapot that this adventure happened. She had started out in life as a perfect pot; but one day her spout was broken off. She was then called an invalid and placed in a corner. Finally she was given to a beggar woman. Then earth was placed in the teapot and a flower bulb was set in the earth. Well, she tells it this way: ‘And the bulb lay in me, it became my heart, my living heart, such as I never before had possessed. The bulb put forth sprouts; they burst into flower. I saw it, I bore it, I forgot myself in its delight. Blessed it is to forget one’s self in another. It gave me no thanks, it did not think of me—it was admired and praised. I was so glad at that: how happy must it not have been! One day I heard it said that it deserved a better pot. I was thumped hard upon my back . . . and I was thrown away in the yard, where I lie as an old potsherd; but I have the memory: *that* I can never lose.’”

—“I know that story!” cried the Bookshelf—for there was a bookshelf in the room—“That is one of old Hans Andersen’s!”

—“It is the world’s way. After all, in the world they must live, these people,” clanked the Clock. “I have marked it for ninety-five years. Do you marvel that I, of all the ghosts in this

room, am apathetic? What is time? All time is alike. Can you tell one moment from another, when they dance past like motes? Is one more neatly shaped, rounder, or sweeter or more melodious? Can you smack it on your tongue? Can your meticulous fingers pinch and appraise its daintiness? All passes. It is *tick-tick* . . . a sorry game, so old it brings levity with it. Do you wonder, my brothers, that none of us wonder?

"She dreamed of him and all her dreams were fairy-dreams. Her mother dreamed of her. I saw it all. And waited, as I always wait . . . must wait. And when she dreamed of him, she knew in her heart that *she herself* had failed, failed to stay in the fairyland where she was born. And before her, *her* mother dreamed, instilled beauty . . . after *her* failure . . ."

"And, before her, *her* mother had failed," consoled the Mirror. "She gazed into me one night and murmured with her own young lips that she had failed."

"Well, you can't grow into the world without growing out of the country you were born in."

"How do all women know these things?" went on the Clock. "*They* know their failure first. It takes those others scores of years. But women know. The world shoulders in upon them more sharply, more suddenly. They succumb of a sud-

den; but they all succumb. With the men . . . the men conciliate from the first. They adapt themselves, as they call it. They palliate. They sink. Quicksand. All passes . . . but it passes slowly.

"I am an old Clock, and I know Time. For I make a business of Time. And I know Time's brother, the World. I know the game these two play. And yet I smile, apathetically, and I tell you that all passes. And *she* knows it . . . the Old Lady here. And her mother before her knew it. And her mother before *her*. Is this a chain of mystery? I don't know. I think it is a chain of epics.

"What did the World do to this boy? The Letter there will boast that it worked a miracle. No; it stole upon him from behind. It passed a hand before his eyes. It took his soft brain and moulded it, twisted it, thumped it, shaped it. It erased the dream. It wrote the fact. It lit lamps where he should have seen no lamps. He walked valiantly after false lights. Why? There were no true lights any longer! If you lose the dream there are no true lights anywhere . . . and everyone loses the dream. It is part of the bargain of the Two Brothers. Are you any longer amazed at our serenity?"

"Give up trying, little Letter," said the Lilacs, "give up trying to believe that such things as

you are of any importance to an old lady. We have just told you why old people are slow to joy. Now, she would rather see my lilac-flowers every spring than a Letter like you every spring! She can understand such letters; but she cannot understand such lilacs. She expects such letters; but she wonders every time the lilacs come—and that wonder is a part of the something that didn't die in her when the world came in. Letters and architects and trips to Europe! . . . alas and alas!" ended the Lilacs.

"He will be a wonderful man," asserted the Letter.

"But a very poor sort of a fairy," said the Clock.

"And a fairy is what the Old Lady once dreamed he was," the Mirror meditated.

"Nothing comes out as we dream it might," sighed the Baby's Hood.

"Therefore—old age and apathy," said the Lilacs again.

And the Clock ticked: "Men" . . . "Men."
"Think of the years" . . . "Think of the years."

Silence came over the room; it was deep dark by that time and the twilight had gone to bed behind the stars. Everything seemed very sweet and cool, what with the lilac scent and wind from the garden; and suddenly the Old Lady appeared in the doorway. She called back quite

softly over her shoulder to the maid and said:

"Don't bring in the lamp, Janet. I want to sit alone in the dark for awhile . . . here . . . in my old room . . . in the dark . . . and think to myself."

The wind went "*sibil*" . . . "*sibil*" . . . "*sibil*" again and died.

"Hum!" said Ruth very gravely, with an inquisitive look at her Gampa.

"A very unkind story, I say, to be told to young ladies," he remarked.

"Ho-hum!" she answered sleepily, "I didn't understand a word of it."

THE RACE-RIOTER

MONK DAWSON had escaped into the hickory bottom. He weighed ninety pounds; wore only a calico shirt and old blue overalls; was in his bare feet, of course; and was a mulatto, the color of coffee-and-cream. The astonishing part of it was, he was fifteen years old.

Sixty-five men leaped on foot and pushed their horses rapaciously here and there through the scrubby stuff of the underbrush, helloing, whipping, shooting off their Winchesters and forty-fours, grinning at each other in the black night, cursing. The night was cool and their blood ran around and around gaily in the spirit of the hunt. It was quaint to think of the differing sensations of the nigger-hunters. Some were jocose as birds, some morose, some vindictive. Some sang dirty songs; some swore ceaselessly; some were grimly silent.

The sheriff rode around them from behind on his raw-boned mare. His plan was for the posse to proceed across the bottom in a half-moon, flushing the hiding-places and shooting at the first thing that moved—if they couldn't take him alive. Hank Barkle, eighteen years old, was the sheriff son of a sheriff, elected to the job upon his father's sudden taking off, the time Ed Preacher came to the fair.

A kind of cherubic heartlessness, an inscrutable impassivity, wholly fresh and miraculous and pleasant, seemed spread over this boy's face, as a high varnish over a picture. He had the disconcerting gravity of Western youths. Of course, he was not afraid of anything that walked or shot. He had killed eight men in fair fights. He drank hard and it left him with a skin like pink oleanders and an eye like a young hound's. He stood six feet four with a kind of clean, swelling strength that lifted you two inches yourself every time you stepped up to him.

"Git over toward Simpson's holler," he murmured, as he passed old man Dikeson and his three boys. Dikeson's ten-year-old daughter lay dead in Dikeson's cheap front parlor a mile away. "I reckon he might have gone thataway."

The Dikesons reined up and started off. "If he has, you won't never see him, Hank," said the old man. "He's mine, and, by God, I know how to use him." There was no passion in his voice at all.

Barkle grinned, and took the same matter-of-fact air. "Not while I'm here," he answered.

Everyone dug in his spurs. There was a nervous, helter-skelter crash and the thin line of beaters tore loose, ricochetting through the woods. Hoofs went pitty-pat. Dry leaves rattled. In the clear night grunts and yells were heard. "We've got him! . . .

go-o-o-t him!" "Here he is!" "There he goes!" . . . Only shadows, fugacious and light as passion. Once a bush rattled loudly and the shotguns, choke-bored, kicked half as many pounds of shot into the agitated leaves. A hog screamed and loped off. Once the four Dikesons threw back their hammers at a current of air in a tree. As the search went on, the nigger-hunters grew more and more intense under the sweet harvest moon. They left off singing, and grunted and gasped and swore stertorously into their neckerchiefs. The flanks of the horses trembled like little rivers where the moon lay on them. The hunt wheeled and combed the land, taut and relentless. One of the posse was shot by mistake; a wound in the arm. One fell in a gully; a twisted ankle. The dogs—two bloodhounds and a pack of irritated farm guardians—bayed tremendously and without pause. The incongruous vain uproar scared every fleeing thing for miles.

"That nigger's killed hisself," shouted one.

"They never do," commented another.

Still another, Beeker, spoke gravely: "It's a good thing, too. It gives us a chance to get justice out of the'r black hides." Beeker, out of previous huntings, knew what he was talking about.

The soft night swung back and forth and washed the three miles of bottom land where, somewhere in hiding, the criminal lay and trembled. His hope of ultimate escape lay there, too. He did not dare

to trust himself to the flat open country. Wherever he was, he knew that. He could not move out of that hickory "bottom," and of course, Barkle and the Dikesons knew it, also. He couldn't escape. So the hunt moved up, closing in, easily and neatly, with a sort of ferocious foppishness.

Monk must be there, somewhere. He was.

Suddenly three shots yapped out, a hundred yards to the left of Barkle himself. Then yells. Then loud questions, heard faintly off on each side, with faint repetitions, traveling lightly further.

A man on horseback galloped up to the Dikeson gang.

"Barkle's got him! He's nailed him!"

"Back there by the road!" "Near the big cottonwood!" "Hoo-oo-ray!"

The hoarse victory ran a mile and a half around the outflung circle. The Dikesons rode like mad, the groups became confused, mistaking each other for Barkle's gang, parleying, swearing, sweating, and then riding pell-mell on again. The hurly-burly drowned all sense of location; the dogs howled frightfully; men shot off their guns out of sheer joy; the cries and yelling rose involuntarily, no one knew why. And in the hubbub they found the sheriff suddenly. There seemed to be some argument.

"I shot him, I tell you," shouted a boy.

"You shot what?" asked Barkle, drawling.

"Shot Monk Dawson. . . . There behind that young magnolia. . . . Yes I did. Yes I did. Yes I did." He said it rapidly, in a fervent incoherence.

"You shot a shadder. What do you want to break up this posse thisaway for, heh?" replied the sheriff, immaculately. "Look at these boys. You've drawn 'em in for over a mile." He turned to the stamping, cavorting, babbling crowd and yelled above the noise, "Fellers, it's Lem Wilkins. Claims to have shot the nigger. I wa'n't fifty feet away. Shucks!"

"He was there, I tell yuh," went on the boy, moistening his lips eagerly. "He was there. . . . I think."

"I looked. You look."

Four or five men scattered, searched and came back.

"Now, let's git back to *man's* work," said the sheriff, calmly. "Lem, don't you do this again. We're a-losing time."

In five minutes the half moon was spreading out again, and Barkle was alone, with the next man about two hundred feet away. He lit a cigar, strolled over a grass-matted gully, and bent down.

"Put up yer hands here, Monk! I ain't a-going to hurt yuh," he said. The handcuffs snapped. Barkle crouched, with a piece of cord and clenched the two bare feet together. The nigger moaned with a sudden pain.

"Dey shot me in duh laig, Mist' Barkle," he croaked, hoarsely, full of fright.

"Broke, huh? Well, I can't he'p it now." He straightened up. "I'll be back thisaway in about a half an hour and all you've got to do is to keep yo' mouth shet."

"Yes, Mist' Barkle," said the nigger through his teeth.

The next morning a furious town knew that the sheriff had Monk Dawson in the jail.

A furious town. A little meagerly painted town, full of sand and dust and dry sunshine and helter-skelter, stiff winds. A town of lanky, grizzled men with burned cheeks and necks, and stringy, quick gestures. They were mostly farmers; a few cowboys. The cowboys were so many knife-thrusts to cowboy fiction . . . they wore ordinary clothes, overalls or jeans or corduroys, blue flannel shirts or calico shirts, red neckerchiefs. Most of them were simply well-exercised louts, filled with sunny, animal desires, negligently concerned at loafing and killing time, fond of drink and muscular excitement. There wasn't a hero in a hundred of them.

Barkle was a traitor.

The ominous message winked and nodded itself around the sunny prairie town. In the pool hall thick necks bent and murmured it between the clicking of the balls. In the "Congress" Saloon

gangley natives smacked their lips over the strong liquor and murmured with their usual non-committal suavity: "I reckon Barkle thinks he was purty smart." . . . "Oh, ya-as!" . . . a wink. . . . "Wait till to-night." . . . "He, he! I guess yes." . . . "Haw! One night's as good as another." . . .

Down at the red-painted, sand-covered depot the hum and snicker of the approaching night's outrage went casually through the group of lounging men.

"He can't hold that jail an' he knows it. Why, his own daddy couldn't hold it the time we wanted that other nigger," said an old man with a tobacco-stained gray moustache. He was sitting on a truck, and appeared very intent upon twisting the nut of a bolt tighter. Suddenly he looked up, lightly: "We'll git Monk Dawson to-night, all right," he remarked.

"Course we will. He's ours, anyway. Cain't see what's got into Hank Barkle that he thinks he c'n keep us from takin' him. Why—the whole town's full of it!" said a fat cowboy, lighting a brown cigarette.

"Dikeson's swore he'll have him. Mis' Dikeson went over an' told Hank's mother that Dikeson said he'd take the nigger if he had to kill Hank to do it."

"He, he! . . . *kill Hank!*"

"Yep."

"Aw. . . ."

"Well, o' course it won't come to nothin' like that. Hank'll give in."

"He'd better . . . after that there trick last night."

And the sun drowsed, and the wind and sand whipped and purred. In the hardware store where the men were buying cartridges the comment was louder. The hardware dealer let out that old man Dikeson had been in early . . . making preparations. He had bought cartridges and . . . well, a new butcher knife. Also some heavy chain. He had it hidden somewhere in a gunny sack.

None of this got to the sheriff, directly. In a vague way, he felt the subdued pulsing of the town's passion; but nobody let go of a decisive word where he could hear it. Had he known, he might have arrested the Dikesons . . . after an ambushed pistol-fight in which the old man and his sons would have been righteously upheld by the community.

So, with whispering and nodding and silent liquor-drinking, the keen autumn day closed down over the shanties and farmhouses. The night came on coolly and neatly, as a bracing young night that must be about its business; a rather dogmatic night that had its mind made up; an alert night; a night that seemed to have murderously formed its con-

clusions, during the sleeping day, from the traitorous adventure of the other night before.

The flimsy jail lay aloof up the railroad tracks where the second street of the town crossed. It was a light, wooden shed in charge of old man Jackson, a county pauper.

With the dark came the gathering and the rumbling of the lynchers. They made no attempt to conceal their faces. They even bore torches. There was determination in that crowd, a sort of nonchalant determination. They mustered here, there, everywhere in what seemed to be a restless gloom. They darted, they sped. They wheeled and yelled, drew closer, stumbled and tossed around their torches with sickening shouts. One drunken falsetto shrieked, "Ah, you nigger! You . . ." and rattled off into a disjointed spitting of grim oaths, delivered with a hitch at the end of each, as his hiccupping voice brought up with a jerk. Another kept cackling in eager staccato: "Where's Dikeson?" . . . "Where's Dikeson?" A sinister malevolence seemed to hold the rabble together; a malevolence broken by bursts of lurid hilarity. They hit the tracks, sprawled and crept and leaped across.

"Where's Barkle . . . huh?" whispered one to his neighbor.

"Why? You don't want him, do yuh?"

"Git the nigger and let's go."

"Hey! Where's old man Dikeson? See to it he gits first chance! Where's Di— . . . Boys! They ain't nobody at the jail!"

"Ain't nobody at the jail!"

"Hell! The door's wide open!"

"Hey! Ja-a-ackson! Whar's that nigger?"

"Out with that nigger, Jackson!"

"Jackson. . . . Rustle 'im out!"

"Ya-as, an' damn quick."

A hush slunk through the crowd and the torches stood still in their places. Nobody spoke; every mouth was, unconsciously, slightly agape at the silence before them. Only the hundreds of feet shuffled. The lynchers could not understand the mystery. What was wrong? Each brain felt a wicked shock. Something was wrong. Sure enough. Something had happened. The jail door was open. Each brain looped back upon itself and began chasing madly around for an idea, an explanation.

Then, quite unimportantly, an old man slouched down out of the blackness of the jail steps. It was Jackson, the jailer, and he spoke in a very ordinary, blank tone.

"Boys," he remarked, "Monk Dawson hez escaped."

The words swished like a whippoorwill over their heads. The mouths took in their gape. Tongues moistened their owners' lips, spasmodically. A

little ripple and smacking of interrogation clicked and grunted around through the crowd: "What's *that!*" . . . "Huh?" "What th' hell!" "*Escaped?*" "Gone? Gone?" "Th' nigger?" "What'd he say?"

Suddenly a gaunt, desperate figure rose above the crowd dramatically, snatched a torch, and stood, holding it high in its left hand, upon the jail steps. It was old man Dikeson, transformed by frenzy, almost mad, shrieking with anguish. He shook the hideous torch and wailed:

"By God, I want Barkle! I want Barkle! I want the sheriff of this here county to come an' stand before me! I know what this hound hez done. . . . I know. . . . I know! He's got away with the nigger, that's what he hez! All you men within the sound of my voice knows that! Here I stand with my pore little daughter lyin' dead thar in my home—lyin' dead thar, outraged an' murdered—" Here his voice broke painfully into wild, inhuman sobs, and oath after oath gritted through his teeth into the ears of the amazed and sullen men. The miserable torch flared over his gray gaunt head, and marked the woe aghast on his face. The tears were streaming from his eyes. His mouth, wide open and twitching, went through silent, grotesque, horrible movements. His skinny right hand gesticulated to carry his meaning, and the left, in

unconscious coördination, dipped and brandished the torch.

" . . . All I want is the skunk that calls hisself sheriff of this county. He won't call hisself that very long; he won't call hisself that very long! Men, you're friends o' mine. You came out here with me to-night because you were friends o' mine. You knew the sorrier that hez come into my home, an' you came out here to do me a friendly act. . . . I want you to help me find Hank Barkle to-night! If he comes nigh his mother's house to-night I swear I'll kill him. I want you to help me find him. Wherever he is, he's got the nigger with him. Oh, my pore little Mary! My God, my pore little Mary gal! Oh, my little, little gal! Dead there, oh, my God, and your pore father can't help you! Can't even git jestice, Mary! Can't even git jestice! Oh, my God, my God! . . . "

He broke down and was led off, amid rough mutterings of consolation. One man stooped, and went ludicrously banging off at his heels, carrying the gunnysack with the chain and the knife jangling in it. The sullen crowd returned heavily to the town. To the saloon. They stalled inside and drank uncouthly, quite depressed, swearing abstractedly at the sheriff's double betrayal of them. They didn't believe the nigger had escaped. They wanted to find Barkle and ask him about it, man-fashion.

But Barkle did not appear that night, at any time. Old man Dikeson claimed the next morning that he had watched all night long at the house of Barkle's mother. Nor did the sheriff return that morning.

In the afternoon, at two o'clock or thereabouts, Barkle appeared on his pony. He seemed quite fresh and young and clear-faced in the open jaunty sunshine. Beside him rode another man, a little, wizened, drooping moustached fellow—Sheriff Moxson, from the county to the south. A veritable little man of sand. Sandy hair, deep, sandy wrinkles around his steady eyes, sand-gritted face and clothing. He whispered a word to Barkle, dropped off his pony and trudged into the barroom.

"I'm swore in as a depitty," he admitted casually. "Barkle's put up a reward of two hundred dollars out of his own pocket." The crowd, hating Barkle with a calm disgust rather than a physical vehemence, was silent. "He's outside now. Gimme some whisky." The crowd filed out in ugly fashion.

There must have been fifty of them, menacing, betrayed, sore. They shifted about and, with unconscious dramatic effect, spread out along the flat sidewalk. Out in the clear middle of the road, in the sunshine, in the stiff breeze sat the boy, gracefully astride his horse. One man at the back of the group slipped his hand suddenly to his hip.

"Yore a nice one, you are, Hank!" he called, harshly jocose.

"Yah . . ." began the others.

Barkle held up a hand. The posture was one of impassive beauty, almost, with something Greek and graceful about it. The living sunshine filled the little street, the south wind flapped his silk neckerchief so that it broke out behind him in little ripples and crackles. His clear eyes shone gallantly, with the hint of a serious smile in them. His bare breast rose and swelled easily. His voice came quick and clean and sweet as a cornet:

"Boys . . . I've offered a reward myself for this here nigger. *But*—if there's a man on that sidewalk that thinks he can lick the sheriff of this county, let him step right out here in the street an' do his fightin' fair. Quit jawin' around behind my back. Step out. Come on. You all hear me, don't yuh?"

He slipped his gun half out of the holster and sat back. His horse never moved. Neither did a single man of the crowd.

"*Now gentlemen!* All I want to say is, my father cashed in at this job and I certainly expect to myself. I figure this might just as well be the time."

Still nobody stirred.

"I say Monk Dawson escaped. I also say I intend to hold down this job of sheriff an' have this

office respected in this county. There's a reward of two hundred dollars for the man that finds the nigger."

He turned on his roan mare and walked her slowly away. And then he turned and came back smoothly, like a pre-ordained curve in calculus.

"Sam," he called, through his stiff lips, "go in and tell Moxson I want to see him." A heavy man moved reluctantly away from his mooring, wheeled, and went inside. The sheriff said, a little more loudly, "I've made Moxson my deputy, boys."

Nobody answered him. Two men put their heads together and spoke in undertones. All of them felt that he had shown them to be cowards, and this made more bad blood.

In the saloon, Moxson, with his hat off and his sweaty hair pasted in a rim around his skull, was explaining at great length something about a batch of guinea pigs he had raised. His children played with them. There were certain antics to be described, amid a splutter of chuckles. He bored people everywhere with his guinea pigs and his children. The talk of this little man of sand was all pleasant and domestic, full of agreeable turns and light friendliness. Like all men of few words, he had a favorite phrase. It might express disgust, apathy, incredulity, passion, anything. The phrase was, "Sich nonsense." In "nonsense" the first syllable was emphasized heavily and drawled com-

fortably. "Naw-awnsense." He was habitually seen with a creased indelible smile fixed on his face, as if it had been wrinkled there with a sad-iron. Yet he was known as one of the worst gun-fighters in Texas, a man who had killed seven men in one running street battle not a week before and had come out unscathed.

Here he was, optimistic, conversational as a dilettante: "By gad! You just orter see the little tykes. Look like a cross between a prurrie dog an' a young rabbit, an' they ain't got no tails! Fact! I nearly died a-laughin' when I fust seen 'em." He beamed.

The man called Sam delivered his curt message. At once Moxson's face straightened. He slapped on his hat and went outside. The next moment the two sheriffs paced off down the street, their stirrups rubbing together. When they had gone far enough, Barkle hitched his head and remarked:

"Gov'nor's wired, Moxson."

"Wants to send troops, I reckon? Sich nonsense. Don't let him."

"I won't."

"Hell, yore a man. You can handle 'em by yorese'f."

"Well, an' anyway I don't figger they'll find the nigger for some time yit. He's hid in a purty safe place. By that time there won't be so much excitement."

"Gimme a cigar, Hank."

Barkle did so. "I got a kind o' pride in takin' care o' this situation single-handed, anyhow," he grumbled, as he spat into the sand in front of his horse's shuffling hoofs. "We'll organize the posse in a minute. I want to see my mother."

They rode on out to his mother's house, dismounted, and went indoors.

Mrs. Barkle, a flat-breasted, thin-faced, gray-headed woman, with sweet-tempered eyes and hair lashed against her skull, looked up and nodded over her ironing. She rubbed her palms against her faded gingham dress and greeted Moxson with a handshake.

Her son spoke. "Mammy, I've let on that Monk Dawson hez escaped. I've even offered two hundred dollars reward for his capture. Now, I've got to go out among the boys and give 'em a big hoo-rah about gittin' a posse together again to hunt for him, jest to throw 'em off their guard. I may be out all night. I've swore in Moxson here as my deputy. We'll stick together and try to lead 'em off. Honest, Mammy, now don't cry; honest, I reelly don't look for any trouble. I reelly don't. If I did, I'd tell you, shore."

She set down her iron, and her lip quavered bravely. "You—you'd better kiss me, anyway, honey," she said.

As they emerged into the front yard and swung

onto their saddles, Moxson pointed down the road at the coming crowd, working itself quickly along.

"They've organized themselves a'ready," he commented. "I don't think they cared much about lettin' *you* organize 'em."

A burst of exhilaration leaped out of the boy. "Hoo-ray!" he yelled with perfectly sincere enthusiasm, as they galloped through the gate, waving their Stetsons at the gang.

From the door, Mrs. Barkle could see her son gesticulating, pointing, brandishing his hat, she could hear his loud, earnest voice, repeating his offer of reward, encouraging them clearly. He made some sort of a long speech at which solemnly, from time to time, they nodded their heads, like men being convinced against their will. Some of them talked back at him. Finally there was a tremendous shout over which he roared out triumphantly: "We'll git the nigger yet!"

Then the scrambling heap, intoxicated anew, buckled and kicked and cantered away.

Unfortunately they did get the nigger. About dusk a little clump of outriders passed the barn in which he was hiding, and, curious and fascinated, he stuck out his head to look.

It was not old man Dikeson who got him. A young farmhand had the boy tied and thrown across his saddle before more than two or three of his comrades knew of it.

Barkle rode up at once, so as to head them off and keep the news from getting to the main gang. He circled around the captor and spoke almost in a whisper, pleadingly, with soft persuasion, at first:

"Come on, now, Judd. Gimme that nigger. Come on, now, boy."

"I don't want to," replied the young captor. "You hain't treated us square. We've got him now. I say, let's keep him." He looked around appealingly at the other six posse members. It was quite dusk and the little cluster of men on horseback stood quietly there by themselves, soft-tempered and argumentative, as if they had been assembled in the corner of a drawing-room discussing the latest play. They nodded their heads. "That's what," said one.

Barkle sprang a surprise.

"Lemme have him now just fer the looks o' the thing, Judd. You know you can take him later. You know you can break down the jail 'most any time. But think o' the law, boy! Think o' the law! Think o' my position here! I know you fellers think I've done you dirt all along with this nigger, but look at the thing fair and square, boys! Put yourself in my place. You, Judd! What'd you do if you was sheriff? I reckon *you'd* try to uphold the law. I know you would. And you'd want to save yer own name and face, too, wouldn't yuh? You'd remember that the c'mmunity put yuh here

an' the gov'nor expected it of yuh to keep the law. What would yuh say to the authorities if they come down here after it was all over and said, 'Judd Bascom, you never done yer duty at a single damn stage in the whole proceedin's.' Huh? Boys, I must have that nigger, if it's jest fer the looks o' things."

They glanced at one another, withdrew a little way, and conferred.

They certainly paid no attention to his reasons; but they probably were moved, in a generous, human way, by his passion. Also, they believed him when he said they could get the nigger back from him. They gave the captive up and rode away to spread the news. Instead of putting the mulatto in the jail, however, Barkle put him in a thick-walled, stone warehouse. Then he telegraphed the governor. Then he and Moxson stood guard.

This thing seemed to move by nights. About half an hour after sundown it was dark—a darkness that closed over quickly. And, the sun being banished, a sort of apt rancor seemed to creep and murmur through the town. It was nothing vocal, expressed, or articulate, as all the rest of it had been. This time it was just a faint drumming, appalling and horrible, that betokened, somehow, a steadfast intent, a general and definite purpose that throbbed deviously up streets and through houses in the blood and wills of vindictive men. It might be explained, as psychic, magnetic . . . this whole

feel of this avidly concentrated town. Something was up. *The thing* was up. It came in waves, persistent and gently billowing, through the blue night air. It seemed that even the cool moonbeams instilled it, an intolerable madness. Yet every physical sign of it was subdued; there was nothing but that metaphysical hum and rumble of sure disaster. The black shadows looked as if they were ready to break out any moment, with ghastly, stalking things, shapeless beings, content just now to lie hidden and to menace. No one could say that the very ground did not tremble . . . as it would have trembled at the approach of an unseen army, an army heavy and malicious; and the very dogs had caught it; stayed indoors or shuddered against safe walls; or, far away, tremulously howled at the moon. And all the time nothing happened. Literally nothing.

The two men on the warehouse steps caught it, and said nothing to each other. Save once. Barkle said: "I am going to talk to them. Somehow I reely think they'll go home."

The nigger inside caught it. It made him shiver, spasmodically, from time to time, like a hound. This was mystery . . . potent, moving, jungle mystery which he could not understand, but which he could feel, in sickening pulsations. From time to time he moaned in a *macabre*, bestial fashion . . . perhaps because of his broken leg. But more probably because of the teeming tragedy of the

night outside, that had passed through the stone walls into his heart.

Once Barkle stepped to the door and said: "What's the matter, nigger? Yore leg hurt yuh?"

"Laig? Laig?" The wail was a desperate denial. "God, no, 'tain't mah laig!"

Nobody spoke or shouted or scraped a foot in all the silent, glimmering, merciless village. It seemed uncanny, this having to stand taut minute after minute, in expectation, responding to the drum of five hundred unuttered malices, waiting for men to appear, cries to be called, shots to be fired.

Little Moxson looked down the street and in a slightly hasty fashion bit off a chew of tobacco. He strained his voice a bit as he whispered: "Sich nonsense! Reckon you've bluffed 'em off, Hank."

But he hadn't. They had been gathering, silently. And they came. They came. It was with a light plodding, away off, at first. Then with a heavier, more ponderous rustle. A blunt confusion of various human sounds that gradually grew brisker, sharper.

Suddenly around the corner of the alley broke the first line of lynchers, as if propelled there by the richly pregnant night. It seemed incredible. They must have skipped in Seven League boots that last three or four blocks. A moment ago they were there, distant, impalpable. Now they were

here. Barkle shouted, with a furious roar. But it was absolutely lost in a crackling, jabbering, smacking and splitting high pandemonium. A most peculiar noise. It did not sound like men's voices. It sounded more like the magnified cackling of a vast henyard, sheer and splitting and incessant, and always high-pitched. It was not laughter. It was horrid, insane, falsetto shrieking of some involuntary sort. The men who did it were probably unconscious of their gibbering.

Barkle shouted into the mess, and threw up both revolvers. Swing! Bang! The alley was full of the rabble, quacking and chattering furiously, monotonously, with full lungs, bewildered heads. They paid no attention to him. It was almost grotesque. They surged to the door; and, in between the two guards, some one banged with the butt of a shotgun against the panel.

Barkle clubbed the man back with his revolver, smashing him down with a quick thud. A dozen more surged. Among them was old man Dikeson. They beat at the two sheriffs with guns and sticks. Nobody fired a shot. Nobody thought of doing such a thing. Each sheriff, working both arms like flails, smashed and battered and hammered skulls, brutally, blindly, rapidly. The next moment Barkle was hit over the eye by a heavy rock. It stunned him for a second and he gasped: "Boys . . . aw, don't, boys!"

It was all over in sixty seconds more, without a meaning, without a design. Little Moxson thought: he saw Dikeson draw bead on Barkle. With a flicker of steel, he shot the old man . . . through the right arm, purposely. He had only meant to put his shooting hand out of commission. But the crack of that cartridge tore the last shred of restraint. In a packed roar of concussions suddenly bursting like a firmament of stars, Barkle was riddled with bullets and sank dead on the steps. Moxson dropped with a bullet through his neck, alive and squirming venomously; if he had had a breath in his throat he would have instantly proclaimed the whole affair a piece of nonsense. Over his body the mob, full of bloody heads and hate, knocked in the door, almost crushed the nigger to death, dragged him out into the alley, trussed him, hurried him breathlessly away. The cracking shrieks were gone now. The crowd was sullen and silent.

Two men supported the wounded Dikeson, who in his position as the father, commanded the affair. They pushed him along at a quick trot, his good left arm stripped bare to the shoulder . . . somebody in haste had torn the wrong sleeve, thinking him wounded there . . . and with this gaunt, flapping limb he crazily gave directions. His face was glad with a fanatical glory. He almost chanted as he pattered along, his monotonous thanks to God for the outcome. . . . "Oh, God, I thank you from the

bottom of my pore bleedin' heart for what you hev done fer me to-night!" Over and over he varied this praise, his sound arm raised to the bland and placid moon in the heavens, then waved off into some gesture or other of command.

A half dozen cowboys carried the trembling, moaning nigger. The rest pell-mell, like beasts of the field, crammed and locked and split about the two main figures, with wide, excited eyes and strangled breathing. And all the time over and over again, in an unvaried tone that forbids description the nigger boy would say: "Oh, God." And in varying tones of piety, unction, humility, utter prostration Dikeson would keep murmuring or intoning the same words, "Oh, God."

At the end of a quarter-mile, the mass stopped, bulged and flowed . . . jogged together and leaped, stumbled and pushed like a flock of sheep to get closer, but they could not. They began quarreling in the rough, petty fashion among themselves, found their tongues at last and yelled thirstily, here and there, from time to time. Men struck others coward-like in the dark, revived old misunderstandings there before that blasphemous immolation, jawed and bickered, kicked shins and glared with small, mean eyes at each other and at the spectacle up front. . . . "Yeh, damn yuh, you *air* a poker-cheat." . . . "Git off o' my foot, can't yuh?" "Don't you shove *me*." . . . "Don't you shove *me*!"

And the like. They elbowed fiercely, stretching their necks. One man asked for a chew of tobacco. Another declared it must be about nine o'clock.

What went on took five minutes. In five minutes it was at an end. Everyone fell back, unloosening his revolvers. A fusillade of hot lead thumped and cut into something against a stake.

Old man Dikeson emptied his guns first and turned stumbling out into the street, alone. He came on down the middle of the road, a lank figure in the cool night, tottering and staggering as one amazed and inebriated. His glowing eyes looked far ahead and above him, in reverence, into the moon-washed sky. The silent breeze blew back his long gray hair, combing it swiftly away from a transfigured face of rapture. Instinctively he thrust his two arms, the one broken, the other with the slapping sleeve, straight out ahead of him, groping as he came. Grand, incoherent thoughts of peace and resignation ran through his head; of a horrible, stern duty accomplished; of a passion burnt out and purged by fire and made spiritual. Whatever hard, remorseless longings he had had were now ebbing fast, ebbing in a vast confusion that was soon to ripple off and serenify itself into a holy quiet. His voice mumbled brokenly, full of sobs, for a few minutes, traveling along the shad-

ows of the houses on each side; then, of a sudden, it rolled out, profound and penetrating; grave and sweet; prophetic and awful; reverberating through the night:

“Jestice! Jestice!”

The cry hung in the air like a paeon. It reached the ears of the earth. It reached the ears of Mrs. Barkle as she crouched with dumb eyes over her boy's dead body.

REVENGE

There is a third Party Silent to all our bargains.—
EMERSON.

When he had made sure Carlton was dead, he bent upward with a jerk, turned calmly and walked a little way back along the path. There he threw the revolver into the bushes.

A knoll obstructed his view of the scene and he sat down with his back to it. He lit a cigarette. The leaves of the trees along the woodland path seemed uncannily quiet, not one of them moving; the greens and yellows on them seemed varnished highly, so that they appeared artificial and unusual to him. In fact, outwardly, the whole Adirondack forest seemed unnatural, its behavior unreal. Inwardly, the jaws of his soul clamped down with satisfaction upon his unspoken "Well, I've done it." He felt himself at an interesting dead-center between the desire to shout, "By God! I've done for him!" and the compulsion of his ideals to whisper "Now, don't vulgarize this by showing any emotion."

No; he must not show any emotion. In five years of making up and unmaking his mind, he had flailed out all the possibilities of emotion in this deed. But now, with the present actual con-

dition confronting him, he had to brace himself. The pungent cigarette smoke curled about his head in the warm air of the August afternoon. He clamped his lips shut; then he smacked his sweating right hand down with vigor upon his immaculate, creased trousers' knee. The tongue in his soul that his will could not halt had its way and cried: "By God, I really have finally done for him!"

He was a mediocre, middle-aged man. His mustache was trimmed to an extra closeness; his greyish hair was extra neat, parted in the middle and brushed back over each temple like pigeons' wings; his lips were pressed together with that extra firmness which is beyond firm men. He wore a boyish straw hat, with a bit of color in the band, a mineral blue scarf, white flannel shirt, blue serge coat and grey worsted trousers. Although he had walked a mile up the dusty path, his patent leather oxford shoes now showed neatly below his dark blue hose. Indeed, his whole appearance was smart, unruffled, rather fetching for a middle-aged man . . . after a murder.

The mediocrity came out more in what he had done with his life than in what he had done with his tailor, barber and haberdasher. He had been a banker up until five years ago, when Carlton had seen to it that he stopped that. In the

mediocre ways of the banking business his life had been cast since his youth. He had moved pallidly in those pallid institutions whereinto so much heart's blood is poured only to become the milk-and-water of Finance. All his maturer years he had been looking through bars or over shiny desks at people and making the awful mistake of thinking them as mediocre as himself. As a young man he made the almost fatal error of thrilling to the sobs of a little rusty, red-eyed widow over the foreclosure of a mortgage; but he had been set right by an older and pallider banker. Since then he himself had many times "set right" the less mechanical younger men under him. In the bank he had learned careful, almost cautious, dressing of his carcass. He forebore loud colors and clung to what was generally considered "quiet taste"—the quietude of his dress, and of the dress of thousands of others like him in thousands of other banks, being considered as a public palliative to that timorous thing called Credit. He wore the livery of financial sanctity much for the same reason the ecclesiastic adopts the livery of spiritual sanctity. Also through the careful, suppressing years, his mind, his heart, and all the million impulses that flow between those wonders, were painstakingly drilled into self-obliteration by the older and more pallid men. He grew to think in terms of

"the Institution." He gauged every opinion by the standard the Bank set. Back of his grey eyes he drowned every spark of original thinking in the milk-and-water flood the Bank poured in his ears. Every emotion which assailed him in the long youthful days in the cage described the same course . . . it rose, was checked, wavered, was conquered. Point by point, everything he knew or did grew, unsuspected into a bulk of mediocrity—as a dictionary grows, word by word, into a compendium of useful information. Other men, not bound by the strict intent of the Institution, could come and use the matter, whatever it was, for purposes of self-expression. Not he. He must go on and fill his book, his compendium of Useful Banking. Useful—to the bigger men who knew how.

This sort of thing would never have gotten him anywhere; and he knew it. He knew it by the time he was an assistant-cashier and went out to luncheon with other assistant-cashiers where, in a grotesque fashion, each mouthed at the other; pried for little business secrets; covered up infinitesimal points of information; generalized on the vague condition of that shadowy horror, Finance; and seldom if ever made even abortive attempts to reveal that they were human beings playing under the skies for their only ten seconds of eternity. He should never

have gotten any where; and a dismal job it was, too.

Then his sister had married. They were of an old family that had once been "pretty well fixed," and she had married well. Moreover, she had married into Finance. Not long after her white brocade had moved in under the shadow of the horror, she began manipulating for him.

He was made a vice-president in another bank. From that bank, under the approving eye of a dimly discernible giant who moved familiarly in the shadowy horror as if he were complacently at home there where the sun never shone, he was moved into a smaller bank, a remote bank, but as president.

He was not yet so dead to feeling, although he was forty-seven, but that he experienced young thrills at this. And ambition—in a rather suppressed and reminded fashion, it is true—seemed to warm his blood, or what little there was left of it. To tell it briefly, the small bank was soon too small for him. As a skilled and mediocre bank-employe, promoted through the various stages to a bank presidency, he, for the first time in his life indulged in Banking.

At first he did some sly things. Then to further his advantage, he did some bold things. Then he did some big and insolent things. The biggest and most insolent happened when, in getting

control of his third bank, he stepped on Carlton's toes.

There was a week's clash, some "unpleasant newspaper publicity," a billowing and an agitation of the Shadowy Horror where the Forces walked, and—he was quietly left out of Banking at the age of fifty.

In perhaps no other walk of life is ostracism so complete. He was marked as a "dangerous man" in the financial world. It was not true; but neither he nor the others saw the ludicrousness of it. A crisp, beaten-minded, little man in a neat suit of clothes; a triumph of human docility; after one brief spree of undetermined haphazard ambition now willing to go back under the yoke. But no. He was considered "dangerous." Such a man, associated with an Institution, would cause the public mind to agitate itself, and there might be "runs" or more distressing publicity. There were thousands of other banking men, safely pallid, safe in their livery of body and brain, who could be depended upon, in whom absolutely no danger lurked.

It was almost a year before the idea of revenge against Carlton set itself up in his mind definitely. It was another year before the idea of murdering him became fixed. He himself, could never have, at first hand, accomplished the vast gulf between his matter-of-fact grudge and

that phantastical punishment. But a panic intervened. A tremendous upheaval of sleeping powers took place, so huge, so cosmic that several of the Forces were violently expelled from the shadow, had to show themselves in the terrific sunshine before the people. And one of these Forces, unable to endure this awful position, committed suicide.

He read about it in the paper, laid the paper down, and said musingly to himself: "And Carlton came out of it untouched. By God, that fellow Carlton himself ought to be killed."

At first the idea stirred him with an immense fear, a most frightening feeling which began in his belly and spread upward over his heart into his head; downward into his legs, leaving him rather "gone." He would think no more of it. But the thought kept coming back and it made him both amazed at himself and afraid of himself, as if he had caught himself in a deliberate act of lunacy. "What sort of a man am I?" he asked himself, time after time.

The thing did not fascinate him, there was no psychic compulsion making him think of it; it was simply that being idle, he was forced continually to remind himself that his idleness was due to Carlton. And every time the name came up he thought of his horrible idea, so that he thought of it quite often. He did not descend,

as yet, to the practicalities of the act; as to how Carlton should be killed; with what weapon; where. He did bring himself on several occasions to imagine, as nearly as he could, the appearance of Carlton dead; but immediately that his imagination had forced him, with effort, up to the picture his mental eyes turned squeamishly from the sight.

He was content with eluding the thought as much as possible and, upon those insistent occasions when it was not to be eluded, of considering merely the general aspect of himself as a murderer—"You wouldn't think I am going to murder a man, would you?" That sort of unspoken statements came into his head on the oddest occasions: once when he was sitting opposite a manicure girl who was coquettishly dressing the nails of this tastefully dressed man; once when a particularly jovial acquaintance was beaming into his face after telling a good story. The thought had something ghoulishly pleasant in it, not alien to lunacy; and he grinned back at his *raconteur*, saying under his grin, "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! You wouldn't think I am going to murder a man, would you? You fat fool, you are pleased with your story; but *I* am going to commit murder."

He used to try to prevent the idea coming into his head save when he wished it to; and he even set aside the hour between four and five

o'clock, when he took his afternoon walk up the avenue, for the contemplation of the murder. At such times, spick-and-span, dressed and gloved with extreme care, he affected to himself the dilettante in murder: he viewed it lightly, sarcastically, aesthetically. He recalled portions of De Quincey's "Murder As One of the Fine Arts." He argued to himself about it abstractedly: murder, in the Italian notion as a removal of an obstacle or as a method of retaliation and revenge. But at that time he could not stomach it. This drummed-up attitude of carelessness was a sham clear through; and underneath his intellectual play about the subject he felt the sickening qualms sweep through his blood.

Thus in three months more he passed to fear of the idea; he could not get the damned thought out of his head. It would catch him nights when he tried to sleep, and he would lie with jaws propped open by the notion, staring his eyes out at the brass railings of his bed. "I must be crazy," he would say and get up to quench his dry throat with cool draughts of water. There was an electric light just over his mirror; he would switch this on and take a long look at himself, as if peering absorbedly at some ghost strangely inhabiting his skin. His lips would move and he caught himself saying, "You fool! What do you mean by even thinking such a

thought? What has got hold of you? Great God, you must not *kill—a—man!*"

This fear of an abstract notion steadily depressed him. He still had not got around to considering the murder definitely, concretely. He engulfed himself solely in the lurking awful horror of murder at large, of murder at all. It dominated him so that, for a period, he took to heavy drinking, but the liquor defeated its own purpose because it unstrung his nerves. Besides, he was not used to drinking and the phenomena of drunkenness had a sufficiently upsetting effect of their own upon him. Long years of regimen in the Bank had impressed him with a preference for temperance. He decided to "taper off," and did so. The only recollection which abided with him of his stupors was that some man in the club, seeing him drunk, had asked of another: "What on earth is the matter with him lately?" And the other had answered: "Oh, he needs to go to work. That's all." He never quite ceased drinking completely; his unwonted debauches left him at length with a new taste—a taste for mild drinking. And this mild drinking steadied his nerves, rather than upset them; it made him "feel good" and, as he explained it to himself, it was of the utmost importance that a man of his age should feel good.

One day a peculiar thought struck him . .

"Suppose I tried to kill Carlton; suppose I did not succeed; suppose he then turned on me and killed me?"

If he bungled his revenge this way it would all be his own fault. But he would not bungle. Carlton was physically a big man; and he was not. But he reflected, with pleasure, how agile, wiry, and "strong for his size" he was. He admitted he did not look like much of a fighter, "but then you can never tell about a man by his size." He was extremely confident he could manage himself in any emergency . . . and his brain went on to view wild pictures of himself struggling with Carlton, choking the big man, tripping him and throwing him over precipices, rolling out from under him to seize something and bring it crashing down upon his skull. He opened and shut his thin, strong fingers, admiring their vigor, admiring the very fact that they seemed small and weak, yet had a "grip like steel." At all sorts of extraordinary moments he rehearsed these imaginary wrestlings with Carlton. He had a habit of clipping his bristling little mustache extremely short and for this purpose he used a pair of tiny scissors . . . He frequently bore his fingers down viciously on these scissors, held them tightly gripped, himself transfixed in a remarkable attitude before the mirror, while in fancy he beat his enemy, rolled him on

the ground, kicked him, debased him. Inevitably he himself came out triumphant, though almost panting from his mental exertions. He was forever trying his strength in little ways, swinging a cane sharply through the air, claspings the stem of a glass as if to crush it, walking violently on his toes as if about to kick somebody.

And yet his inner, his trained and adjusted sense, kept telling him all this indulgence was vulgar. Time and again his mediocrity expressed itself in an ideal of culture. Revenge, his revenge—and as such the murder now began to form itself to him—was too just, too magnificent, too “Greek” an affair to be bungled. These imaginary rough-and-tumble matches ought not to be considered for an instant. If he were dealing death, it must be swift and certain death—a death with dignity about it—a death as between gentlemen—a death in which murderer and murdered maintained each his self-control, his grandest qualities. There must be no fisticuffs, no common brawling, no—no “muss.”

He began casually to pay attention to newspaper reports of murders, suicides, and the like violent deaths. Up to now, in common with the run of men, he had refused to believe that such a thing as murder ever entered the brain of any man rightly brought up. Murder was some incomprehensible thing committed by foreigners,

by the submerged people. Nobody with culture, with a sense of the humanities, ever committed murder. It was a job for fiends. Any discussion of it took in, for granted, an *outré* bestial element not recognized by society. He had tried to think of friends of his who might consider the idea of murdering one another . . . impossible!

Yet now, with him, it was possible. As weeks passed, almost before he realized it he came to think of it calmly; and his thoughts were quite sane. He justified himself by asserting over and over that this man had affronted him; had damaged him deeply in the eyes of his society; had gone too far in insisting that his society call him an outcast. There underlay all civilization a code, a stern law which looked to him to remove this man.

The idea of Carlton turning and attempting to kill him first brought him to an actual contemplation of the practicalities of the deed. And in allowing this contemplation scope, he had hit upon the notion of reading the newspapers for murder. He cared nothing about the persons involved; he kept a clear and intense eye upon the methods . . . "the man suddenly drew a revolver, placed it against his companion's breast, and fired"; "presumably, the assassin carried a long knife in his inside coat pocket"; "a piece of three-fourths-inch pipe, wrapped in a newspaper, was

found near the victim"; and so forth. These were successful murderers in which the murderers escaped; he read with equal interest of the mistakes, miscarriages, pursuits and captures of murderers. He looked up occasionally from his perusal and smiled at an acquaintance, then returned to analyze . . . a natty, grey-headed, well-to-do little man plotting a murder of honor.

The idea became professionally fixed in his mind; he must kill Carlton. This idea rose above the tumult of the common world of newspapers, acquaintances, Finance; it hobnobbed in his head with vague fatalistic ideas. In fact, he insisted throughout that his whole motive was ideal, the ideal of a man who had been properly brought up. Then, too, in an idle moment, his intelligence propounded that he had but one life to live: that that life had been wrecked just as it reached its full by another man: that very little of that life was left him, what was left was personally intensely distasteful, and that it did not matter—to him personally—what he did with it. He concluded that he might best devote it to the one big motive idea which now remained to him: namely, to kill Carlton. For by disposing of Carlton he would, in all seriousness, do the grand thing.

He had progressed through idle resentment, through physical fear of murder, through all the

timorous degrees of preparation for an ideal. He could now face his ideal as he could face his breakfast; and inasmuch as the attempt was gentlemanly and clean, he was satisfied. His ideal was revenge. He argued that revenge is primal, intuitive, noble. It is the acme of self-assertion. It has its debasing elements, of course, unless done magnificently, cleanly, honorably. But of course he would carry it out magnificently and honorably.

One day, with a slight shiver, he unlocked a drawer in his dresser and took out his revolver. It wobbled in his hand and the hand itself grew sick and moist. He was unaccustomed to the sight or use of weapons, and this especial revolver had lain unused for at least ten years. It was a pearl-handled affair, .32-calibre, and had to be cocked by hand. He aimed it at himself in the pier glass and the barrel bobbed up and down wildly beyond his control. He tried to assume a professional attitude toward the gun, coughed slightly, laid the thing down in the drawer again as calmly as he could, and decided he would need a larger and more modern weapon.

Certainly he would need an automatic self-cocking revolver. One had to be prepared for any emergency in a job like this. An automatic, certainly.

He brought home a heavy wicked steel blue .38 navy revolver. It was abnormally heavy;

so heavy that to carry it around was like carrying around the universe, or the biggest thing in the universe. It was an automatic. You pressed the trigger, it cocked itself, shot, adjusted the next cartridge, cocked itself, shot, and so on, for six cartridges, if you kept pressing the trigger. Frankly, he was afraid of the thing. He went off up the Hudson one afternoon and tried it. The noise was deafening; the weapon so heavy it all but fell out of his hand every time he shot; the trigger-spring was stiff, very hard to work. There was an old beer barrel in the woods, relic of some East Side picnic. He thought: "I will stand about fifteen yards from this barrel and empty all six shots into it. Surely I can get within fifteen yards of him and if I hit him at all with one of these huge cartridges it will kill him."

So he pointed the revolver at the barrel and began firing. Six shots and not a shot struck the barrel! He reloaded and tried again, with the same result.

The clerk, a little gimlet-eyed man, explained in answer to his complaint: "No wonder. You must cock it yourself every time—so—with your thumb. Then shoot. I can hit a beer *bottle* at fifteen yards with this gun."

"What good, then, is the automatic feature?" he persisted.

"That is only for use in an emergency."

Oh, yes. To be sure; the emergency. There might be an emergency.

As he now sat breathing out the delicious cigarette smoke he forced a shadow of a smile at those former anxieties. There had been no emergency, no bungling, no sudden dismay, no struggle. Not even any surprise, he thought. He had come to the inn, telephoned over to Carlton's lodge, ascertained he had started on his usual solitary walk over the hill path. Had set out, met him, planted his dapper little legs wide apart across the path and had killed his man at the first shot. It had been so confounded easy. He felt ashamed of his vacillations, fears, primings of valor, dampenings of valor . . . all the long succession of thoughts, feelings and states between thought and feeling which had marched through him for a thousand days and nights.

Now he tried to reason with his exultation, but it was impossible. His exultation, welling up from within him like a fury, like a passion, like something primitive from a bestial abyss, had its own way. He snapped his hard little jaws together, threw down his cigarette, jumped up, ground his heel over the smoking stub. His common little grey eyes sparkled fiercely.

"By God, I've *done* for him!" he strained out in a high nasal voice to the varnished, uncanny forest. Not a leaf moved.

He reflected that he ought not feel this way but, inasmuch as he could not keep the feeling down, he judged it to be an essential and natural one. And he explained the feeling by telling himself that what he had done was the one abiding feat of his lifetime. It—this desire, this accomplishment—was something like ambition in other men's lives. Only—only ambition had a way of "getting" its votary. Therein revenge was superior. Because—well; well, he had attained his revenge and it had not turned on him and engulfed him. He supposed that was it . . . something like that. Yes, and ambition was sordid. Whereas this . . . what he had done . . . he got no money from it, no fame from it, none of the ordinary things of life. But he felt an internal nobility; he felt as he imagined martyrs felt. And he was proud of his will-power, of his successful determination to do an extraordinary and unselfish thing.

He was suddenly struck by the infernal quietness of the wood. It was not the normal silence of trees and hills; it seemed an unusual hush, as if manufactured. Each leaf caught its breath like an animal listening, waiting. There was no gloom, no melancholy. On the contrary, everything seemed preternaturally bright; yet an embalmed brightness, without animation. The sunshine lay on the leaves, on the ground, on his

shoes as if stuck there by a sort of gelatine. A vague perturbation began to assail him; it was as if he had killed all motion when he killed the motion in Carlton.

The neat, ferocious little man stood tense and listened with both ears. His eyes stared straight ahead of him, unused. He heard nothing, not a step, not a crinkling of the leaves, not a crackling of tree bark, not a swish of wing, not a gritting of grass . . . nothing. He moistened his thin lips with a cat-like motion of his tongue; jerked his hand quickly to his hip-pocket, pulled out a silver flask and drank four gulps of an extra fine Scotch whisky, almost a liqueur. He must get out of this place.

Yet he waited. He seemed to himself stricken into a trance, entirely appalled by the strange deaf-and-dumb quality of the woods, conscious of his faculties but unable to employ them . . . for a moment. For a moment the grotesque notion of making signs at Nature, of indulging in pantomime pleased him. He even did point over the knoll to where the dead body lay and start to clap his hands; but he stopped them, half way in the preserved air, suddenly reflecting that the noise would be hideous.

Then, like a trim middle-aged army officer, he clicked his teeth, turned on his heel and strode twenty paces down toward the inn. Here he

stopped short and, with absolutely the gesture of a villain in a melodrama, he smacked his right hand abruptly to his forehead. The revolver . . . the damned revolver was right there beside him.

About face and back up the path. As he rounded the sheltering knoll he was unfortunate enough to see a shoe and a trouser-clad leg. The shoe was toe-down, bent abruptly at the cap, the heel projecting frozenly in the stifling air. Abominable sight.

He stepped back quickly behind the knoll, again jerked out the silver flask, and drank an outlandish drink of the strong Scotch. He had to wriggle both himself and the bottle to get it back into his pocket; and he wriggled to produce a cigarette from his case, letting several of the cigarettes drop to the ground. It was a time of wriggling. He admitted it and let himself go. He had to have the revolver.

He wasted a match or two, got the cigarette started and this time with effrontery strode up to the bushes into which he had hurled the weapon. Here he began pawing about. The perspiration started around his neck, the cigarette smoke got into his eyes and made them water. But he kept his two hands employed in the search and his back to the . . . to what he had done.

The revolver was not there. The perspiration increased and as its exudation continued he felt

the phenomenon of his pose giving way. The more of this rank sweat, the more he came back to his natural self. And yet there persisted another self, the fortified self which had accomplished his revenge. Inside the skin of this common sweating man, the abnormal assassin still found place.

Finally he found the thing. It had slid, after hitting the ground, and had rolled under some leaves. He had kicked it with his foot. He straightened up, pulled down his coat sleeves, which had worked up half way to his elbows, went back and got his hat, which had fallen off his head. He made a detour so as not to look at Carlton, reached the knoll again, and began wiping his forehead, his neck, the back of his ears, his watering eyes, with a monogrammed silk handkerchief. When he put the handkerchief away he touched the revolver, which was now in his inside coat pocket. The touch made him start. He fell to reflecting, hastily, in a tumult, and his thoughts got out of his grasp a bit. Possibly the whisky instead of making him staunch had set him whirling. At any rate, the touch of the revolver made him start, the blood began pounding slightly yet noticeably in his ears, and the odious perspiration again commenced to annoy him.

What moved him in regard to the revolver was

this: Why had he gone back to get it at all? Instinct. Instinct for what? For self-preservation. Self-preservation from what?

Here he stopped in the glaring sun and looked with hatred at the waxen trees . . . Well, the devil! To remove all traces . . . to prevent this—this crime from being identified with him. Self-preservation from—oh, from distasteful consequences. He looked down at his bright shoes. They were covered with dust, and bits of twig had caught in the hooks of his laces. This condition received all the meditative inspection due to a very solemn fact.

Distasteful consequences? Damned if he wasn't harking back to the law! Law. He passed the back of his very muscular little middle-aged hand across the dental crevice between his dry lips. He considered that there was something vulgar about this last thought of the law, something stupidly vulgar. His profound motive was hardly to be interpreted, hardly to be comprehended by a . . . by a mess of those people. "Those people" meant detectives, magistrates, jurors, counsel, some bawling officer of the court, newspaper reporters. A filthy mess. Engines of society. Concentrating on an individual, an individual whose individual motives were far from concerning them. In the bank he had learned thoroughly the distastes of publicity. He

supposed this was something of what he was getting at, some second nature of his exerting itself, when he had gone back after the revolver. He buttoned his tight-fitting blue serge coat about it, and as he looked down at the bulge which the ugly firearm made, he could not, try as he might, prevent his mind's eye seeing a prosecuting attorney wave it at a jury. It made him a bit sickish. His mouth was dry enough as it was, with that peculiar desiccated condition of the tissues which whisky leaves. However, he clapped his tongue against the roof of his mouth with a smack and marched off down the path; he really felt worse now than he had felt in years. He looked back at his exultation over the murder with self-deprecation; he really should never have had such a feeling. He had told himself so many a time. Still he probably never would have done away with this egotistical Anglomaniac ass . . . that was what he was, with his eternal riding-breeches and his swagger and his soft, loud talk and his get-out-of-my-way-or-I'll-kick-you air . . . he would never have done for him, probably, unless he had been buoyed up by that exultation. Damn it, but it had been a corking shot. Square between the eyes without a flicker.

Then his spirits sank again. Physically, he felt weak, too. It was a rotten, rotten mess.

He had gone about a quarter of a mile in that

comatose afternoon when he suddenly halted and reflected upon the aspect of the corpse as it would present itself to a detective. It was silly to think so, but he wished this murder would present itself to all humanity as a just murder, striking down out of an all-seeing sky upon a wretch—a deserving wretch who had got what was coming to him. Impossible! The engines of society would get to work on clues and what-not, and they would run him down.

And they would run him down. A sumach bush, flaring red, encountered his eye at this moment. It had a disconcerting bloodshot apathy about it. He listened . . . not a sound, not a movement.

He had had on his left hand a gray suede glove all the time and this he began to pull off and stuff in his pocket, standing still in the meantime, staring at the sumach bush. He reconstructed in his mind's eye the attitude of the corpse. The big man must have fallen a bit off the road, leaving his legs in plain view on the path.

His own steps had not passed; he had never gone nearer than—what was the distance to that beer barrel?—fifteen yards.

Wouldn't it look better if he went back and put the gun in the ass's hand? A theory of suicide. A sort of passion to do this absurd thing

swept over him, possessed him; and his crinkling heels ground around. He went back.

When he again approached the knoll, he tiptoed cautiously and peered around it, like a boy playing at hide-and-go-seek. The toe was still there, dug into the dirty brown of the pathway. It seemed phlegmatic and eternal, as if it were a part of the landscape. He withdrew his head only to throw it back and pour another dose of the fortifying Scotch into it.

Then, for the first time, he actually approached the body. He clenched his teeth together so tightly that the upper and lower jaws seemed grinding each other to bits and with one spasm of revulsion succeeded by another spasm of diabolical determination, he forced the steel blue gun into the dead man's right hand. The abomination was accomplished. He stood with staring eyes looking down at his work. The outraged hand lay spread out over a bit of winter-green. The head, face downward, was sunk in a laurel bush. Only the broad back, below his eyes, seemed to move and heave. Of course, it did no such thing. He almost vomited at the notion. It was quite bewildering for a few seconds and he held his hand to his eyes; but underneath the pink shadow of his fingers in the glorious afternoon sun, red convulsions went on. So he opened his eyes again. What he intended

to do made the little man in the gray trousers smile; he intended to see how good a shot he had made of it.

He took the thing tentatively by the elbow; it did not bulge. He tugged harder; it still did not budge. Then, reflecting that cadavers were heavier than living bodies, he seized the right shoulder with all his might, intending to turn the body over. He did not succeed but as the inert thing rolled waggishly back into place he saw all he wanted to see . . . his aim was not as good as he had thought; his bullet had torn out one eye and one eyebrow and had fastened upon the dead face an expression of comic surprise. This sight was quite too vulgar. He smacked one hand against the other like a cymbal-player, an action showing his utter destestation of the mess . . . the rotten mess . . . amid his genuine horror and fear. As he drove from one hand to the other the caustic stigmata gathered from his contact with the corpse, his fear focussed acutely in his eyes. They popped out of his head. They saw something—

A trail of foot prints. These footprints approached and spread around the unprotesting dead man; they revealed no signs of a struggle; they proclaimed a murder in cold blood. They attested to no five-year-old motive of noble, decent and gentlemanly revenge; they marked no

code of outraged feelings or honor. These footprints did not plead the desperation of a life broken at its prime. Nothing of the sort. They identified the perpetrator of a rotten mess. And they ran clear back to the inn.

The little grey-headed man cocked his head up at the thought; and he laid his hands akimbo on his hips, defying the mute sneer of his own doings.

Then exquisitely, imperceptibly, horridly in that varnished afternoon a ghastly feeling which neither native valor, nor superimposed argument, nor romantic appeal, nor excellent Scotch whisky could combat, began just at the last bottom joint in his vertebral column and spread gradually upward through his back and frontward around his ribs and into his abdominal cavity. It sickened him completely as it spread. He felt as sick as if he were in a witness stand hemmed down by accusing questions.

The footsteps back to the inn . . . his appearance there . . . his telephoning over to Carlton's lodge . . . doubtless the testimony of the servant at the lodge; of several servants at the inn; of the gimlet-eyed revolver clerk who could hit beer bottles at fifteen yards. How these little accessory people clutter up an accomplishment! His scramble in the brush to regain the revolver . . .

those cigarettes—monogrammed, of course—which in his nervousness he had dropped just beyond the knoll.

As item after item recalled itself to his mind, the pervasion of his agony became so intense that physically, he actually did not know what to do with his body. Each was a startling and distinct call upon him to assert himself, to express himself . . . jump, fall on his knees, run, shriek, do something. One wild thought of escape—ignominious and natural—seized him and shook every muscle in his body. He had a notion of cutting across the mountain and catching another little “jerkwater” railroad. He saw himself, an agitated little man in torn clothes, telling a stupid conductor that, having neglected to buy a ticket, he would pay cash fare. He saw the stupid conductor, later, magically expanded into a Machiavelli, grinning at him from the witness-box.

The contemptible, abominable tangle of the whole simple affair!

With the sweat discomposing him and the whisky making a squeamish lump of his stomach, with—above all—the general air of thorough doneness himself . . . as he had said of Carlton, “By God, I’ve done for him” . . . he felt, at last, quite disenchanted of any noble pretensions, of anything at all spiritual in the affair. It was, he

felt, a case of his own precious hide. And a hide not so precious, at that. For his hide was certain to be seized by the State. (He looked up at the blue Adirondack sky and marveled that it should cover, miles away, such terrible things as courts of law, electric chairs, "engines of society.") And, moreover, his hide, even while still his own, harbored a despairing heart, a heart full of revulsion, a heart that could start an emotion but could not finish it, unless it finished it in obscurity.

The little man in gray trousers threw his hands up half-way to the sky; and dropped them again.

His bewilderment was complete; as complete as if he had put his hand down before his eyes again, as he had done before, and, in the pink shadow, had seen the red and meaningless convulsions of his strained eyeballs. He had no cynicism, no clear cold intellectual strain to fall back upon. Never a creature of deep feelings, he now had no deep resources.

"What an extraordinary catastrophe!" he muttered aloud. "What an extraordinary catastrophe!"

He reached suddenly down and took up the revolver from where the dead man's hand had left it on the wintergreen. He marveled at the old miracle . . . that a little piece of lead, crashing through a certain area of tissue would keep

legs from moving, eyes from dancing, lips from smiling, thoughts from being expressed; would, in short, reduce a magic thing like a man to a festering piece of manure.

He looked down at Carlton. With a spasm of belated fury he kicked him swiftly in the ribs. The thing made no sign. He kicked the body again and again passionately. "They'll get me!" he shrieked. "They'll get me! Won't they? Won't they? All right. I'm old and I've got nothing to live for—now. But I got you! I got you, you—" he bawled out a long row of nasty, disgusting, blasphemous oaths. His neat mineral blue tie, jerked out of security by his waving arms, flew over his shoulder.

Then he drew himself up panting and erect, cocked the revolver and thrust it upside down into his mouth, so that the barrel-end hit against the roof of his mouth. He cast one wild glance around.

"Anyway, they'll think it was noble of me," was his last thought.

\$448.00

IN fourteen decillion B. C., according to nobody in particular, this stubborn planet upon which to-day we so carelessly shuffle our feet, began a series of Experiments toward an End. Billions of bits of magnetic dust were driven from the planet's bowels, churned around, fermented, and worked over. At first she tried for trees, and got trees. Then snails, clams, jellyfish. Then brooding over her intent, she made the jellyfish climb up out of the sea and prostrate itself upon the sand. Then she watched yearningly through morose years the light and the air beat down upon the jellyfish and irritate it; and she saw the irritation grow into sores, and the sores grow into lungs to breathe with and eyes to see with. After three hundred million jellyfish had died in the process, she slumbered and considered the process complete. After fourteen decillion, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-six years had passed, she rested, a pregnant planet, from her constant, vast, and multitudinous stew and turmoil; for the End of her Experiments (as far as this sketch is concerned) had come. The numberless millions of jellyfishes and the superb march of countless years had produced Leander Percy Johnson.

Leander enters here, bowing pathetically among men, acting the idiot among girls. You have Leander in his name, as if it had been wrapped around him like a label—Leander Percy Johnson. He was book-fed to the point of mental numbness, flat-chested, and common clay. Leander, eighteen, hadn't a thought in the long, bony box of his skull. He had been stuffed with schooling, but had come out unscathed. He was pasty and superficial and hopeless, and he was going to a big Eastern university. The reason he was going to a university was because Hiram Jesse Johnson was a man who had been starved all his life of all the finer things—or rather, of what he considered the finer things. For instance, he had never had more than a common school education. He had never been able to travel. He had never had a chance to do big work among big men at the big tasks of existence.

He was now fifty-five years old, prematurely bent and gray, a broken man, working on a stubborn, poor little farm outside the small town of Happydale. To the man who really saw into Happydale, its name sounded like harsh laughter. To the man who really saw into Happydale, its people seemed all to be, somehow, sick people. To the man who really saw into these people, it

seemed as if they took sixteenths of an inch to be miles.

Hiram Jesse Johnson, on the other hand, thought miles were sixteenths of an inch, or even millionths of an inch. So you see at once he had no business being in Happydale. He was too vague, too mystical. When he should have been bargaining in a flat, metallic voice with Henry Binns, the grocer, over the price of the lettuce and radishes he had brought in to market, he was instead plucking his old gray beard and roaring childishly about the deep damnation of sending corrupt George H. Price back to the State Senate.

He loved to trace mysticism in the flight of bees; he had grand, shapeless ideas about the influence of stars upon our earthly births and doings; he believed in spiritualism, signs, witchcraft. He contemplated the hordes of men as so many blades of grass, perishing or flourishing under the sun and the rain. He believed in honor, in all men being honest and kind. Like some babbling child he spoke of the liquid wash of Time, the inconsequential pangs of Evolution, the unimportance of the Minute, the Insignificant Mile. A sort of an old Walt Whitman, dreaming of the cosmos, was Hiram Jesse Johnson.

His day was filled with sweet thoughts, and his night with shadowy visions. His neighbors

called him impractical. He saw no sense in a bank account because it was almost a psychological impossibility for him to admit the presence of a bank. In fact, he doubted the reality of the world itself, to say nothing of the banks in that world. He could not save a dollar, because he thought in terms of millions of dollars. He was intellectual, not brainy. He was loose and magnanimous, with a dread of business. He was the only failure in Happydale, a town full of people called successful. He lived alone on his wretched farm with his only son Leander.

"I mean for my boy to have what I couldn't get, gentlemen," said Hiram to the town circle in Barker's drug store. "He's going to go through X——, yes, sir, X——! if it takes every last cent his pa can dig up."

"Doc" Sniffen looked at Jim Burckhardt, the real estate man, significantly. "Goin' into the mining business, Johnson?" he asked.

"Education!" went on the old man hastily. "Education is what we all need. It broadens our minds, gives us culture, makes us appreciate more about the world we live in. Instead of just having five senses, then we've got five hundred senses, five thousand senses, five million senses!"

"He, he! Most too many for Leander to carry around without stumblin,' ain't it?" asked Sniffen. "Seems weakly to me, Leander does."

"You could carry some of it around with you, 'Doc' Sniffen, without any inconvenience," snapped Johnson. Then he softened: "And so could I. I wish I'd had it. I wouldn't be here now, grubbing away at a dinky, miserable farm in a little hidebound county like Maxwell. I'd be out helping to do the big things, the new thinking o' the world. Maybe I'd be making new inventions to increase human comfort; or be an honest judge, giving the poor folks a square deal; or something like that. But I didn't get the chance, gentlemen. I didn't get the chance. And so I'm doing the next best thing. I'm sending my boy out into the ranks of the world's fighters, equipped the very best I can afford to. I don't want him to hang around Happydale and be the source o' misery to his father that some o' these town children are." Here several faces in the circlet set vindictively; but the old man, gazing into his dream, saw nothing. "I don't want Leander to stay a town boy all his life, jumping counters and living out a narrow-minded, hard-hearted existence here, grabbing every penny in sight and missing the magnificent spectacle of this great human fight set in between our two eternities. I want him to live in the fire and hot heat o' things. I want him to be a man among men."

"Yeh, I suppose you do," said Hick Lawson, knocking the ashes from his pipe and stalking

out of the door. Lawson's boy, Johnny, had been arrested twice in Happydale for drunkenness. The rest of the circle said nothing for a while.

"It'll take him four years to go through X——, won't it, Hi?" "Doc" Sniffen finally asked.

"Yep. Four years of idea training. Four years. H'm." He combed his hand through his gray beard. "Four years." For the first time his brain had turned to the actual cost of the enterprise and he was computing details.

Sixteenths of an inch are miles in Happydale. Hi Johnson had, in his unthinking way, called the town boys narrow-minded counter-jumpers. He had cursed them as penny-grabbers. He had said they were sources of misery to their fathers. Hick Lawson, shiftless, lazy, and unhappy, told his wife that night:

"That old fool Johnson was around to-day bragging about that milksop boy o' his and cast-in' slurs on Johnny. I got up and left the place."

"What'd Hi Johnson say?" snapped his wife angrily.

"Well—somehow—he sneered at Johnny's—Johnny's being bad, mother. I gave him a piece o' my mind, and come away. I can't stand such things. Just simply can't stand it."

"Stuck up about that Leander, is he? He's

got lots to be stuck up about—a footless, no count dummy like that.”

Barker, the druggist, had a son who worked in the shoe store. Barker vengefully included his boy in the Johnson epithet “counter-jumpers.” Mrs. Barker cut Leander’s name off the list of a party she was giving that week. Mrs. “Doc” Sniffen circulated reports that, according to medical authority, Leander Johnson was “a little light-headed” already, and that a college education would “literally cause his brain to bust with egotism.” A nephew of hers, owing to the proud intermarriage of Happydale’s “oldest families,” suffered from incipient lunacy.

“I don’t think you’d better let Leander call here any more,” said Mrs. Bemis to her daughter Lucy. “I hear his father is going around town telling how Leander is too good for us. Lord knows! That spindle-shanked numskull! If it comes to being proud, I’ve a right to be as proud as forty Johnsons.”

In less than a week the already lonely Leander found himself cut off from even a speaking acquaintance with the people among whom he had lived all his life. He had neither the ingenuity nor the bravery to find out why. However, as he was leaving the first of the month for college, he paid no attention to what was taking

place in Happydale. As soon as his father could give him the hundred dollars he would leave.

They had made up their mind on this sum; it was to be so much cash above railroad expenses, entrance fee, and other incidentals. Where they were to get it from was a problem for his father. Leander knew his father would take care of him. His father always had taken care of him.

In the quiet of his own room, the old man met for days a hideous reality; he had to have one hundred dollars by the first of the month. He went through the tortures of helplessness. It was the first time since he had mortgaged his meager farm that he had had occasion to think of big sums of money, and it made him sick now to have to sit devising plans, going over petty schemes, haggling with himself about impossible bargains, hour by hour, only to come back to the shame of acknowledging he had no way of getting the money. He had bragged a dozen times to all the town that Leander would leave for college on the first. He hadn't exactly meant to brag. But he had talked too much. In Happydale, sixteenths of an inch!

The last evening before Leander was to leave Johnson went around to old Jim Burckhardt. Burckhardt was "in real estate;" judging from his ears, he was in it up to his ears. He was

eighty years old; for sixty years he had been in Happydale. In fact, rumor said he had grabbed the town when it was first laid out, had jockeyed claims, stolen lots, sold new streets to the town at exorbitant prices, and finally managed to screw and gouge a mint of money out of Happydale. He was bleary-eyed, almost stone deaf, and dragged himself along the streets like a wounded rat. He was a gray man; his head was gray, his skin gray, his eyes gray. He wore unfashionable gray clothes, a gray neck-tie, an old gray hat. His face was scratched with deep lines of greed, miserliness, and cruelty; and when he spoke, his croaking voice made children shudder. He was the richest man in Happydale. He stood for Happydale; he was interested cannily in its growth; he was president of its Commercial Club; he was president of the Citizens' Bank.

Old man Johnson trembled a bit and cleared his throat, as Burckhardt waved him to a chair on the porch. "I—I came to see you, Jim, about—about—about a little matter of money."

Burckhardt made a quick, ratlike motion of his head. He could hear excellently whenever money was mentioned. "Don't think I can do it," he said. "Money's scarce."

"Scarce with me, too," answered Johnson with an attempted smile. "You know that, o' course, from the way I haven't met my interest on the

mortgage. But this I want now is to send Leander away to college on. He can get work to do there to work his way through, waitin' on table —"

"What?" yelled Burckhardt, with his hand behind his ear.

Johnson's humiliation was sharp. They were sitting on the front porch, where all the street might hear. "He is going to wait on table to pay his way through," he shouted.

"Glad he ain't so stuck up but what he can work for a living," grunted Burckhardt.

"I want to give the boy a little money just to ease things down for him while he's breaking in, Jim. I've set my heart on this, as you know. I ain't going to tell you how much I've worried the last few days trying to find some way to get this money for him. Jim, there *ain't* any way. I haven't got a thing——"

"What!"

"I've got absolutely nothing to offer you as security!" shouted Johnson.

"No security! And want money!" shrieked the other.

"It's like begging it, I know, Jim. But be friends with me this time, and let me have it. Be kind to me, Jim, and I'll make it up to you. I'll pay you any interest you want. I hate to have to talk this way, and ask you favors. I hate to hum-

ble myself; and I wouldn't do it for myself. I wouldn't do it, Jim, but I want my boy to have his chance in life. You've been—well, in a way, you've been kind to me and a—sort of generous in the past, and I—”

“How much?” barked the old real estate agent.

“One hundred dollars, Jim.”

The other man sat and look grimly at him through the dusk, with blankness in his gray eyes. “One hundred dollars,” he coughed, and fell to thinking. Johnson sat twisting his moist hands between his knees in an agony of shame—and of hope. Then Burckhardt said: “You are an old fool, Hi. You'll never amount to anything, and neither will that blamed boy of yours. You've got your head full of stars, and he's got his head full of fog. You're sending him off to college to get more fog. Now, I'll lend you a hundred dollars more on that hog lot you call a farm; but if I could prevent it, Leander wouldn't get a cent of it.”

Johnson, with a rush of happiness, signed a note and said: “If it wasn't for Leander I wouldn't want it, Jim.”

When he was a block away from the house his shame overtook him again, and he burst out crying to himself, as a lonely old man will cry, unhappy, emotional, vague. He was all feeling. In the depth of his woe, his heart was his whole world. His brain worked numbly, and heeded not the practical af-

fairs of life. He had no sagacious curiosity as to why Burckhardt voluntarily lent him the money. He did not know that Burckhardt was dickering with an electric line to come into Happydale, and that the plan was to have it come in along the line of this useless Johnson farm.

And so Leander went away to X—— and worked out his year, sending home dutiful reports to his father. And so the old man lived through all that education as if he himself were getting the things he had been deprived of in his youth. In his innocent way he went around the town telling every one he met about Leander's feats in Greek, and chemistry, and trigonometry, and French. At the drug store he boasted to the town circle about these things and "Doc" Sniffen asked: "What's he going to do with French in Happydale?"

"He ain't coming back to Happydale," boasted the old man. "He's going to work in New York when he's through college. He'll need a broad field, gentlemen. There's opportunity in New York. That city's full o' big men."

"What?" yelled old Burckhardt, malevolently.

Johnson, suddenly silent, did not answer. All Happydale knew that Leander had gone to college on Burckhardt's money. They did not know how much it was. They speculated that it must have been five hundred dollars. Lucy Bemis had overheard the two men yelling at each other that night

on the porch. Tattle, crackle, tattle, crackle, went in scorn the tongues of Happydale whenever old man Johnson, mildly exulting, spread fresh news of Leander's distant prowess. And all through the four years Leander was gone, the fires were building under him with the innocent fuel of his father's boasts.

Through his freshman summer Leander stayed away and drudged somewhere. Then in the fall, came a pitiful demand for more money. "It's very hard for me to keep this up," wrote Leander. "Any money you can get, any money at all, please send me." So the old man, who had been so proud of his son, humbled himself once more to the nearly deaf ears of Burckhardt; and the miser, with the electric line coming closer, squeezed him out another hundred dollars, adding a wise saw and a sarcasm or two to the gift. Some months later, when Leander wrote a mawkish poem which was printed in the college paper, and when Johnson was showing it gleefully in the drug store, old Burckhardt, in a sudden burst of nasty temper croaked:

"So he's a poet, hey? A *poet*! That's what I'm paying out my good money for!"

And the gossips silently nodded the message to each other, and it went winking over the town, chilling the glory of Leander's verses. Old Burck-

hardt was putting up for Leander's education! It had already cost him two thousand dollars!

A third year came. A third humiliation. A third loan of a hundred dollars from the little gray man with his gray eyes fixed on the trolley line. Leander had changed his course and had gone in for languages. This was an immense feat to be heralded through Happydale. Leander was studying Latin, Greek, French, and German. In an enthusiastic letter the boy had written: "I can already talk better German than Haubeil, the butcher." And uproariously his father had told Haubeil what Leander said. The butcher glowered and added his mite of hate. Item by item the town was building its verdict. In college, the spiritless, spineless Leander was nothing; in Happydale he was despised.

In college Leander had unconsciously drudged himself to doom. He had waited on table until he had become, in his soul, a waiter. The outward display of servility had crept under his skin. He was a mild, characterless, vapid, and sometimes silly piece of human machinery. In appearance he was soapy, sloppy, and stale, with now and then a gaudy burst of hosiery and neckwear to damn him all the more, and make his Sunday best his very worst. He went to his classes with a sense of oafish duty; and with the same sense he wrote his faithful letters home.

At the beginning of his senior year, came again the same furtive, startled cry for money. It made him sick to think how close he came to actual poverty. It made his father sick to think of the fight his son was making for an education. It made his father sick, too, to have to go to Burckhardt for the money. But he went, and put himself into debt so deep there was no chance of his ever paying out. He owed Burckhardt four hundred dollars, up to the time of his boy's graduation. Then, by figuring down to the last cent, Leander wrote that he "believed he could make it on forty-eight dollars." So Burckhardt advanced forty-eight dollars more, with the electric line only ten miles away, and Leander was graduated.

Old Johnson framed that diploma and announced that Leander had gone away to New York City to begin his career. The town, at last abashed by the facts, sat back in vindictive silence and waited.

It did not have to wait long. In September, heart-broken, spirit-broken, and penniless, Leander came home. His father met him with tears of joy and pangs of dismay at the depot, and all alone, of a shiftless, quizzical crowd, welcomed him back to Happydale.

"I've come back, dad," was all Leander said. "I couldn't make a go of it in New York. I tried and tried. I walked the streets hunting for something to do; but there wasn't a job."

"What did you want to go to work at, Leander?" asked the old man.

"Well, I thought if I could get a job—waiting at table just to tide me over, you know—but I couldn't."

"Couldn't you—couldn't you do anything with all that French and German? Teaching, or translating, or something, I mean?"

"No. I didn't really know enough to do any good. I just wasn't thorough enough at anything I studied, dad."

The old man patted the boy's shoulder half-heartedly and said, with a catch in his throat: "Well, well, Leander. Cheer up. We'll find plenty of chances for you here. The town's proud of you, if I do say it myself. I've been telling 'em all right along just what you were doing; and they've all been real interested."

"Dad, about all that money—four hundred and forty-eight dollars—" began Leander with something of a whisper.

"Now, don't worry. I arranged all that easy enough. Jim Burckhardt let me have it on the old farm. He's been right kind, and I'm going to see him about giving you a job in the bank to-morrow."

Leander, in a daze, accepted the decision silently.

"What? A job in my bank?" barked Burckhardt the next day. "Ain't any places open. No, sir. That whole Leander deal is closed, Mr. John-

son, and good riddance. You wouldn't take my advice. You wouldn't let him stay here and 'jump counters.' Hey? Remember that? I told you the boy's head was full of fog. Now it's even worse. It's full of professor fog. No, sir! I'm a business man, pure and simple. I want no Leanders around my bank."

Johnson's hand trembled as he took his hat. "I'm awfully sorry, Jim," he said, with difficulty "to hear you speak this way. My boy is as good as anybody's boy. It's me that's unpractical and careless and slipshod; not him. I admit I don't know anything about business. But Leander, I want you to remember, worked his way through four long years at X——"

"Yes, with my four hundred and forty-eight dollars," sneered the little man in gray.

"Good day, Jim Burckhardt," said Johnson.

No. The town was not proud of Leander.

Everywhere the town's little enmities prickled and stung, as only a little town's can when it has gotten its hate up against you. Girls tittered as they passed Leander in the streets; the boys were too busy to talk to him; the elders quoted at his unconscious head the foolish boastings of his father in the years gone by. For a long time he could get nothing to do, and the heart of his father sank day by day before the incomprehensible fact. Winter came on, and in the long desultory months, Leander

spent his time shamefacedly around the house. Among other things, he took to writing—vague incoherent pieces of description, meaningless verses in different meters and stanza-forms, imaginary editorials, riddles, puzzles, limericks.

This gave his father an idea. He would get Leander a job on the little daily newspaper, the Hap-pydale *Palladium-Independent*. He consulted with the editor and proprietor, Mr. William Wallack Henderson, a fat, gracious, lazy man with a kind heart and an abysmal ignorance of how to run a newspaper. Therefore, in the spring—the spring of 1898, be it remembered—Leander went to work on the daily. His duties were to gather local news—police, court house, real estate, and train arrivals—collect and solicit advertising in the afternoon, see the paper off the press in the evening, repair the donkey engine which ran the press, give the papers out to the newsboys to be delivered and at night to read and clip from the exchanges and write the editorials for the succeeding day. For this work Leander received five dollars a week.

He went to work in April. But he could not get any local news and that duty had to be taken away from him. The reason he could not get any local news was because the town jeered at his pretensions as a reporter and went out of its way to conceal things from his knowledge. His father, how-

ever, was happy, and so Leander worked on, stupidly, in a bewildered, faithful fashion.

In his first flush of earned money he bought some lavender socks, bright tan shoes, and a purple beribboned straw hat. These became the laughing stock of the town, a steady joke among the young bloods. But Leander, with his yellow mop of hair jutting out from beneath the straw confection, perspired on, chasing his thin legs and flat lungs out on innumerable errands, his shabby coat buttoned tight about him even in the warmest weather. He despised a reporter's work; he was even afraid of it. Away down in his sensitiveness, there was a distinct dread of asking people questions. If he pried into affairs it was timidly, with his heart in his mouth.

"It's none of my business, dad, and they all hate me so," he argued with his father.

But he kept at it. His years as a waiter had taught him a sort of unthinking obedience, and, in truth, his work was not really difficult. If only the ample Mr. William Wallack Henderson had known it, his paper was a joke. It had no news; it had no advertising; it had no influence. But Mr. Henderson took his paper very seriously . . . at least, he took it seriously once a month, when he had to pay its bills. And so——

Old man Johnson was hoeing in his tiny garden, when the boy came home. He looked up, and saw

the comical straw hat and the pathetic face of his son beneath it. Leander leaned over the fence and stared for a long, long time at his father. In his throat, a lump kept rising and falling, keeping time with the rise and fall of his shoulders. The boy was sobbing, in long, dry sobs. Then the tears streamed from his staring eyes, streamed blindly for a long aching minute, without his seeing his father, without his seeing anything, and he bowed and hid his face in his arm along the fence.

The old man's imagination went trembling out over vast and hideous possibilities. He dropped his hoe, stared, wiped his hands aimlessly against his legs, and licked his dry lips. What had happened to his boy? He tried twice to ask, but could not get the words into his mouth.

"Dad—oh, dad!" the boy wailed. "Oh, daddy, daddy, my own old daddy!"

Old man Johnson came over to the fence, lifted off the foolish straw hat, and stroked his boy's head with stiff, uncertain hands. "There, there now, Leander! What is it, son? Don't cry. What is it? Tell your daddy what's happened, won't you? Just tell your daddy what they've done to you. It's all right, Leander. Tell me."

The boy broke out into fresh sobs and blurted through his trembling lips: "Mr. Henderson—he—he told me he wouldn't need me any more. He—he said I was a luxury around his office! He don't

want me, and—I— don't know—what—to—do. Nobody wants me. I want to work and do—my—best, but nobody wants me. Nobody'll give me a chance. Everybody in this—this dirty old town hates me and laughs at me. I tried to pay no attention to it, daddy, and be brave. B—b—but I ain't brave. I—I've known for ever so long what you tried to do for me, the sacrifices you've made for me; and I tried to make it up to you. But it seems like I can't. It seems like there's no way in the world for me to get a start. It seems like everybody and everything is bound to make me fail. I hated to come back here, but I thought we'd be so happy together, you and I, even if I was a failure. Then when everybody began picking on me, I didn't say anything; I just stuck to it, because I saw I was pleasing you. But I knew it wouldn't last. I know I'm not a newspaper man—or—any—other—kind—of—a—man. B—but I love you, daddy; and I wanted to be near you, and I wanted to make you proud of me." He crumpled against the fence and sobbed painfully for a while, then blurted furiously: "Now the whole world's a blank, and you've spent four hundred and forty-eight dollars on me that you'll have to work yourself to death paying back. And I can't help you. Oh, daddy, I—can't—help—you! That's what hurts me." He lifted his sodden, tear-stained face to his father.

Hiram Johnson licked his dry lips and tried to keep the dismay out of his voice. In his breast his heart sank heavily. "Leander," he said, and his voice broke. He waited a moment, staring beyond the boy's yellow head at the old house. His eyes saw the back porch with the pails and the broom above it, the trash underneath. But he paid no attention; his mind was dumbly working at this new catastrophe. Finally, he gave it up.

"Leander, boy, I'm sorry. I reckon's that's all I can say, Leander; I'm sorry. This ain't what either of us had a right to expect. Is it, Leander? Somehow I feel as if we don't jibe with the town, or even with the world. There, now, don't cry, Leander. You're a good boy, as good a boy as anybody's ever had. Don't worry about the money, if that's what's worrying you. I'll take care o' that."

"But what are we going to do, dad? What are we going to do?"

The old man looked off again, silently, at the porch. "I don't know," he said at last. "I really and truly don't know. O' course, I can go on this way, just as I am. I can take care o' myself without any trouble, until I die. I don't matter, you see. It's *you*, Leander. What about you?"

The boy hung his head.

"I've tried my best, Leander. Now, don't go and be hurt at what I'm saying. I wouldn't hurt

you, son, for all the world. But I've tried, every way I know how, to help you—it's been my failure as well as yours. I don't know anything more to do." A sob came into the old man's throat. "Can't you do anything for yourself, Leander? Ain't there *anything* you can do? You're a grown man now. I know this town's been hard on you. But there's other towns; maybe they're not all like Happydale. If you could just get out and do something for yourself now! If you only could! That would change their opinion of us. I ask you honestly, Leander, ain't there *anything* you could do, by yourself?"

Leander looked at him grimly for a moment. "Just one thing, dad. I can't tell you to-night. But I've been thinking it over all day—all day I've been thinking it over." He wiped his eyes, straightened up, and took his hat from his father's hand. "I want you to remember this—sometime—when you're thinking of me. I want you to remember that, somehow—it ain't my fault or yours, dad—but—I ain't brave. I simply can't help it. *I ain't brave*. Every man ought to be that, if he's going to get on in the world."

And so, at midnight, without telling his father, Leander stole away and caught a train up to a junction point of the main line. There lay a car of volunteers who were whisked away in the morning toward Tennessee, volunteers in the war of the

United States of America against the Kingdom of Spain. Leander was with them, trembling at what he had done.

There was a camp at Chickamauga while the war was on. Many, many men never came out of that camp; for the rains fell and the sun crawled and fumed with ghastly sickness through their bodies. A little, bewildered man sat as Secretary of that War; and beneath him other little bewildered men scuttled in helter-skelter panic, gritting their teeth, sulking, or boasting, but always doing wrong. All the volunteers who went into that camp went full of a spiritual fire, a divinity, an exaltation. Strong fiery lads; determined men. The hearts of the sturdy states had beaten happily at their going. Each star in the flag was a tear at their going. And they kissed good-by to their fathers and mothers and sang their valiant songs as they went into that civilian's camp.

Many, many men never came out of that damnable place; for Ignorance, fetid and swollen, had marked the tent sites where the young lads lay. What had the United States known of war? In thirty years the brains of war had moulded and decayed. Nobody knew how to pitch a camp. The tents sat one above the other on a hillside. The rains came; the filth washed down upon the tents below; the sun blazed; the fever crept up from the ground and into the veins of the soldiers waiting

there. This is part of the silent story of Chickamauga.

Leander was in that camp. Leander was stricken with the fever and it ate greedily through his flat chest and his skinny legs. Then he was put in a big tent, where there were other sick men. And one night a storm, hurrying up, pelted at this tent with sheets of rain and blew it down with shrieks of wind. In the morning, some energetic medical men lifted the canvas off the sick. Eight of them were dead. Leander was one of the eight.

That next autumn a traveling man said to a group of townsmen in the Commercial Hotel at Happydale: "I'm an old X—— man, class of '97. Seems to me I remember a classmate of mine—quiet chap—named Johnson—who was from this town. Wasn't he?"

"Yeh. Didn't amount to much. You mean Leander Johnson," said "Doc" Sniffen.

"What about Johnson?" yelled old Burckhardt.

"This gentleman's talking about Leander!" shouted Sniffen in reply. "I said he didn't amount to much!"

Old Burckhardt coughed. "No. He didn't. I always said he wouldn't. He was a costly experiment, Leander was. I reckon that's about the last experiment in college education this town'll have."

The traveling man laughed contentedly at the thought.

"Doc" Sniffen misunderstood him, leaned over, and spoke in a whisper: "You can laugh but"—jerking his thumb at the blinking, gray figure of Burckhardt—"it ain't no laughing matter for *him*. That experiment cost him a pretty penny. Nobody else cares. Course, nobody else put up anything. Even Leander's old man didn't put up anything! For four long years it was always Burckhardt, Burckhardt, Burckhardt. He was the one that was hard hit."

And the old earth groaned and began it all over again. For Leander had returned to the jellyfish whence he came. He had gone back to fourteen decillion, B. C.

THE 2000th CHRISTMAS— A FANTASY

That I spent, that I had;
That I gave, that I have;
That I left, that I lost.

—Robert Byrkes.

It was eleven o'clock of a cold Christmas Eve in the year 1999. In the little old tumble-down carpenter shop of meek old Meyer Abrams, back in a ramshackle courtyard of the Ghetto, sat the strange young Jew, alone. All up and down Baxter Street the wretched winter wind howled along, slamming the creaky tenement shutters; and the drizzling sleet pelted the roof tops and the gutters cruelly and incessantly. It was very cold in the old carpenter's shop, a lean-to shanty without a stove in it, but the young apprentice sat in silence, heedless of the icy chill, his eyes staring straight ahead of him. He was worn out, sad, nervous, and hungry, there amidst the dead shavings and the planes and the saws, the gimlets, braces, and bits. Every now and then he would pass his hand tremulously across his forehead, or stroke his youthful, silky beard. Nobody in Baxter Street, in the whole East Side of the great city of New York—not even old

Meyer Abrams himself—knew from what country the young Jew with the weird, staring eyes had come.

"Are you lately landed?" Abrams had asked him quizzically when he had wanted work.

"Yes." But he would not tell the name of his country.

"What do men call you?" the old carpenter had demanded.

"Some men in my country once insisted that my name was—Josephson. That name will do me now."

"A revolutionist," thought Meyer, and shrugged his shoulders.

He was a good carpenter, all that the old master demanded of him, but his mind seemed to be fixed on other things. For five weeks he had scarcely tasted food, and at night, when the other Jews sat about the cafés arguing hotly over anarchy and government, or stayed in their houses with their children tumbling noisily about them, the young immigrant preferred to sit alone in Abram's dingy, cheerless shop, gnawing his nails and thinking, his long legs outspread, his head thrown back, his dreamy eyes fixed on the ceiling. Why he would eat no food, nobody knew. It is said that men with great intentions need little earthly help; that they live on something strong within them; that they even radiate

some of this strength to carry everybody they meet along with them. Their eyes glow; a mysterious force comes out of them. Their nerves vibrate, and a marvelous power goes into everything they do. Josephson, the young Jew, was this sort of a man.

As he sat there on Christmas Eve, at eleven o'clock, his brain seemed bursting with great thoughts. He quivered and shook with intensity of his feeling and in the dimness of the old shop a glow seemed to stand around his hair, like the glow around a sick woman's head when the pain of her suffering is exceedingly great. And all the while, as he thought, his eyes stared—unseeing, abstracted—up at the hoops and boards which lay along beneath the ceiling of the shop. He was as a man hypnotized by an idea vaster, more profound than himself.

At midnight, the old church bell halfway across the frozen city boomed its hollow message of the great new day. By ruddy fires, over cups of cheer, the millions of people laughed, looked into each other's eyes, and were happy, sheltered within warm walls that shut out the grim, cutting winter. The whole city, where the city was rich, lolled in comfort indoors and sang songs to the coming Christmas.

But as the young Jew wrapped his long coat about him and strode out through the bitter

Ghetto, he passed tenement after tenement where the starving poor shuddered in their chilly, bare rooms. There was no merriment there, only curses at the rich of the land. For in 1999 the rich were very rich and the poor were very poor; and the poor had no faith in anything, because they had been so often deceived. Long ago the rich had been rich because they had held the trust of the people; now they held only all the gold in the nation.

And the strange young Jew, as he passed along, nodded at the dismal tenements and said, over and over to himself: "That is why I am here; that is why I am here!"

At Sixth Avenue he took an elevated train to One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street. There he got out and boarded a railroad train. It was the last one to leave New York City that night, and its destination was the Pocantico Hills country to the north.

Before it was two o'clock, Josephson found himself alone in a deserted railway station and among the hills. He knew no directions, but he had vaguely a sense of where he wanted to go. So he buttoned his long coat more tightly about him and struck out down a road through a wood. In the summer time the wood was made up of chestnut trees, but to-night they were gaunt gallows casting hail upon his shoulders. The fear-

ful wind kept freezing him as he stumbled weakly along. The lonely horror of the winter night traveled at his heels, enveloped him, misled him over icy hills and hollows. Yet he kept on and on. He had no fear. He did not feel the cold.

The sleet softened suddenly to a chill rain and soaked his greatcoat through. The frigid gale bit clear to his bones, and made his teeth shake; yet a strange fever came into his veins and kept him miraculously warm. He fell and crawled and groped and strode along, over the shivering grass, the dead bleak leaves, the frost-bound stones, always in the direction he sought, always toward the great house with its wide-flung pavilions, back among its pine trees on the crest of one of those tumbling hills.

On this miraculous night the immense house, all lighted up, shone like another miracle. Its turrets and cupolas were dark, but the glass conservatories, the broad verandas, the lofty ceilinged vestibules and rooms scattered their yellow radiance through the midnight darkness like some fairy palace blazing with jewels and lanterns.

The young Jew silently and humbly crossed the wide stretches of lawn and stood before one of the French windows of the flower room. He turned the knob and walked into the empty glare of light. From room to deserted room he passed

until at length he came to the library. Here he pushed another door open and stood motionless on the threshold.

In a high-backed leathern chair before a crackling log sat an old man, alone, smoking a cigar. In all that house, save for the servants, the old man was alone. For twenty years, forty years, he had been alone; and on Christmas Eve he always sat thus, late into the night, smoking and thinking before his fire. A certain birth-night, too, and a certain wedding night he celebrated in this fashion. The rest of the time he worked and gathered up money. For he was the richest man in the United States, and the most powerful.

The young Jew fixed his great, sorrowful eyes upon the old man; but the old man, lost in thought, stared into the fire. He was a hale old man made of strong fiber, with great shoulders and sturdy chest, long arms, a big, magnificent head all covered with gray hair, and a gray beard. His eyes shone clear. His cheeks were ruddy. Life tingled in him as in a mountain brook. Yet when he thought deeply, as now, a softness spread over his face and his fiery eyes slumbered.

The young Jew looked at the old man's face strangely, and moved his lips as if talking to himself. Then, between the two men a sud-

den consciousness leaped, a silent thought in the brain of each, like an incommunicable song, so that, in a moment, the old man lifted his head and stared.

"I am here," said the young Jew.

"Look at that man," murmured the millionaire. But it did not seem odd that he should be there.

"I must speak to you," said the Jew.

And the old man passed his firm hand over his eyes as if in a dream, and answered:

"Come to the fire—you. Take off your coat, for you must be cold."

"Cold? What is cold? I am not cold," answered the other, in a poignant voice. Then he said: "I see you are thinking. That is good; for you must think still more."

There was that in the wanderer's face which made the millionaire curious. So he said:

"Who are you, young man?"

And the other replied: "I am the man who must make you think still more."

The old man looked at him more closely, intently. "You have come to ask charity on Christmas Eve," he declared. "Well, you shall have it."

"Yes," said the young man simply; "I shall have it." And he drew off his coat and stood upright, facing the millionaire. "Listen to me," he went on. "When trees and running streams and little

seeds think, it is time for you also to think. But I will tell you, you must think as they do—charitably and generously toward all the people on earth. Behold, old man, you are the richest man in this land. You own running waters, transportations, harvests, the materials with which men build even their houses. You own everything inside and outside the law—everything which one man can own. When people no longer trusted your pieces of paper, the gilded front of your wealth, you took up the gold of the country. Do you know that men and women and little children are starving to death because of these things? Because of you? You enjoy your bread and meat with relish. Do you know that men are starving?"

The old man smiled. "A Socialist," he murmured.

And the young Jew smiled, but his smile was somehow different. "This is why I am here to-night. You are an old man now and are soon to die." The old man shrugged his shoulders as if that did not matter. "But it is not yet too late for you to begin. There is a chance to save you yet, and make you what you ought to be in this world."

And the other asked: "Are you a madman?"

"No. You are the madman of us two. You have a chance to become sane again. But it must come from you. All from you, from the heart

out. There is a spirit inside you which for forty years has been hard and cruel and bitter. Now it is Christmas time, and that spirit must be softened and made sweet. There is no other way to gain what I want. For though I could look into your eyes a long time and you would do what I tell you to, that is not enough. That would not be *you* who was doing it, but something outside of you. From a bubbling heart of pure good will, from the inside, must your charity come."

As he spoke, the young Jew came over and laid his hand on the other's shoulder, looking with wide eyes straight into the other's eyes, whereat a fascination and a fervor came from the Jew. A queer, dazing, insistent power poured along his steady gaze. The old millionaire met it sternly, but the young man's eyes thrilled him in his old heart.

"You are a hypnotist," cried out the millionaire.

"I am a hypnotist. I am other things, too. I fast, and can coax the white soul from your body. I can make trees walk and the hills vocal. I can bring back the blue spirits of the dead. But these things do not matter. I came here to-night to change your soul and make it sweet, so that your charity will be real charity. Why did I select you? Because you are potential—you are that one man who holds the most power in his hands. Through you I must work. Or, it is better to say, through you must your new self work. And it is not loose

charity I ask of you, the deadly giving away of wealth for nothing. No. Your charity shall be practical."

Now the old man was amazed at the Jew's attitude and, though he felt himself struggling in a dream, he opened his lips and asked:

"Why should I say 'Yes' to you?"

And the other spoke to him softly, but his tone filled the whole room, and said:

"Why should you not? What do you live for? Think well before you answer."

"I live to work; I work hard," the old man replied.

But the Jew said: "What does your work give you?"

And the other answered proudly: "My work gives me power."

Then the young Jew raised his hand and pointed out the window. "You hear that gale out there, and you talk of power? Power? That wind could manifold itself and break your bones. You hear that rain? That rain could rise and drown you, and you could not flee. Do not talk to me of power, for the only power you have is as a man among men. There are other powers which make that power seem as a weak perfume and vain music. Now, tell me, why do you work?"

"Because the work compels me. Because I have nothing else to do. Many men and women are like

me. I have nothing else to care for." And he told how he was all alone, for his wife and daughter had died, and he added: "Why do I tell you this? But it is so. I am alone."

"Especially on Christmas Eve?" asked the strange man gently.

"Especially on Christmas Eve. And on the night the baby was born and died with her mother. And on the night my wife and I were married."

"How, after all, a great man is only a man!" exclaimed the Jew. "How, after all, he can be stripped and shown as little and sick, or old and brokenhearted!" And his hand on the old man's shoulder seemed to throb with a wondrous sympathy. "He creeps over the ground with his two legs, a creature of bowels, brain, and heart—and we call him great! Though he sickens and dies, behold, his very monuments acclaim him great!"

The old millionaire shook his head slowly and gazed into the fire. The presence of the weird young Jew seemed somehow not at all marvelous to him, in his old age and in that pregnant night. He accepted him as he had come, in simplicity and sincerity. The very air was filled with an odd quality of wonder and belief, of sympathy and understanding between the poor man of the Ghetto and the rich man of the great house. What, after all, did life matter? The old man recalled, without emotion, that he had not fifteen years to live.

The fire cast his shadow on the wall. He knew the time would come when he would cast a shadow nowhere. Not even a shadow should survive him.

Suddenly, among all his thoughts, he reached over and took the young Jew's hand.

"I am glad you came to talk to me to-night. In some peculiar way you refresh me," he said. "Yet you bring me strange ideas."

"It is because you have given me the chance; yet long have we needed each other."

The millionaire was silent again for a minute; then he asked slowly, with a tremor in his voice: "What meant you, my friend, when you said you could bring back the spirits of the dead?"

And the other answered: "That is what I meant. For I know the land of ghosts and the ghosts call to me out over their twilight. And I deal with strange hands and luminous faces, and I speak with lost voices. Even though I am in the sunlight, in forests or meadows, I hear them talking. They whisper to me, acquainting me with their happiness; for they are dead. They render me miracles; and, behold, I can cure sick men by laying my hand upon them. I fast, and straightway I am a brother to ghosts. Straightway I feel in all my nerves the tingle of the Specter-force. Before my eyes they move in myriads, or come singly, one at a time, these shadows of men, and always they murmur in my ear: 'Brother . . . brother.'

They are like dead leaves rustling on a tree. They are like the lapping of hidden waters. They bring me messages, they bring me thoughts . . . from China, from Palestine, Alaska, Peru, everywhere. I know, I know everything, always. For I see the world with a flying eye. To me, this earth is but a mere sign in the sky; and yet I can weep over one poor starving man. Alive he sends me messages, as dead he sends me messages. My ear is bent and ready for these things; and I hear him."

"But—about the spirits? About bringing them back? You said you could bring back the dead. It is nonsense. I have heard it said it was nonsense."

"Nothing in death is nonsense."

"Then give me my daughter, for I am old!" cried the millionaire suddenly.

"I will. And I ask no reward, for you shall do my bidding. I ask no reward, for you shall give of your own willingness. For it is commanded of us all that as I give, you shall give." And the Jew closed his eyes and sank into a chair for the first time.

At once a tremor shook his wasted body; for a moment he groaned and grew rigid; and then his body grew supple again. His jaw fell from his jaw, his white face swam with sweat. His turning eyes rolled like bits of glass. Then slowly, on the floor by his left hand, a faint light smoke

appeared strangely, and clung there against the carpet, swaying like mist under the moon, building itself, blowing outward, upward. Above it hovered a dimly glowing ball, tenuous, attached to the filmy smoke beneath. Then gently, gradually, the whole gauziness molded itself like winding fog, and—lo, it took the billowing shape of a little girl with a haloed head of brilliance, her feet scarce touching the floor so light she was!

The old man looked with horror, then with pain, at what he saw. He stared in silence at the shy visitant, then at the mute young Jew. Over him rushed spasms of dread at the unknown, waves of love at the forgotten. What worked there in his soul was exquisite. In seconds he changed as never he had changed in all the brutal years among men. He was no longer among men; he had left the earth and floated amidst unearthly raptures. And at last he wet his lips with his tongue and fell toward the shadow, crying: "Margaret! Margaret!"

But the marvelous girl drifted farther away and merely smiled. It was not like the smile of a living person; it had a deeper sweetness, like a smile from Paradise.

"Margaret! My baby!" whispered the old man in his throat. But she eddied to the young Jew's forehead, seemingly swept and kissed it, and was gone. And the young Jew trembled and awoke.

Then, for some minutes, both were silent, look-

ing at each other with comprehending eyes, while only the wind and rain kept up their doleful noise. In the end, the Jew held up his hand and smiled gently. "Why should she speak to you—and break your heart? You must not ask too much, old man."

"I—I ask nothing," murmured the millionaire, groping his way to the chair.

"It is better that way. For the children that are gone sow such sweet madness in men's minds as would wreck the earth and make the heavens topple down. Dim, potent, tiny mysteries who hold the hearts of all mankind in their pale, little ghostly hands . . . as they wander in innocent ways through God's eternal gardens! Look, I am but a poor Jew, and yet all children know me; and I know all children. It is the gift, the gift that does it."

"I would give anything for that gift," murmured the old man.

"It is not for such as you," said the Jew, "for you are to give, give everything, and get no recompense. You are one of the great men of the earth, and therefore it is your province to give. That is your task, your duty—to give everything. More shall come to you in return; but you shall not get back that which you give. And this is real charity; that if you had but a dollar and knew you should never be able again to get another, you should give this dollar to the poor."

The old man was amazed and cried out: "I will give—but let me think of my baby!"

And the Jew answered him softly: "As long as you live, and after, you will never be able to forget her. For she will blow eternally like fragrant pain across your soul. And so I say to you, put her by, for my time is short. It is more than two hours past midnight and I have a great deal to say."

"Go on. I will listen to you."

Then the Jew arose and, with his right hand in the air, spoke solemnly:

"You must sweeten that soul of yours inside your body—that little, dark soul which has never passed out of you yet—so that it will be pleasant in you while yet you live out your years on earth. You must soften your heart for a greater happiness. And then you must give . . . give all your millions."

The old man threw up his head at the words and said: "No! No! I cannot. I am a fool to-night. There is something uncanny here. But in the morning all this will have passed. I cannot give up my money."

Then the Jew's voice changed to an iron sternness and he thundered:

"What will you do with it when your carcass rots and flies are in your brains? Will those you leave it to have brains like yours to keep this money

close? I do not ask you to give it away in folly—as you will if you give it away to those you hold in your intention now. You have a great mind. You are a wise old man. There is a wise way to be charitable. It is to plan so that the poor can have an opportunity to help themselves. Build your benefactions on grand plans, magnificent and vast.

“Give to the poor many schools where they may learn their trades. You own the steel mills. See that studious apprentices are given a chance to rise. Give work to the poor and always give instruction in that work. Find them their places in shops. Take every youth who will come to you and prepare him for life. Make an opportunity for him. All cannot make their opportunity as you did, for times have changed, and this is no longer opportunity’s day. Do you not think that a starving man will work if he can get work? Yet all the Ghetto to-night is starving!

“Conceive the suffering of the little children, born in the blackness of life, and remember forever the wailing of the children in filth and blindness, where the sun shines not and the slugs of poverty crawl. You must give heed to the children of the Kingdom of Man, for in them lies your hope, and never can your child come back to you should you damn the unborn and the born. Forever shall you hear their voices crying in the labyrinths of

night; forever shall you feel the brushing of little, imploring hands. The children you forget shall break your pleasantest dreams and follow you in the daytime until you abominate yourself.

"Have pity on the children, for this way you shall live forever. Teach them, and make them your friends. Raise them up from where they lie cast among ignorance and drunkenness, licentiousness and despair. By your schools you shall come to know them, and hereafter they shall praise you because they are no longer wretched. Through all time men shall love you, for in your time you shall have loved the children."

The old man listened to his words in silence, and over his mind came thoughts of his money. For his gold oppressed him whenever he thought of it, and it wearied him like a sickness.

"I see no way. I do not care for the money. But I see no way," he said at last.

And the other replied: "See my way. It is the only way."

"But I cannot," answered the old man. And then he said: "You move me strangely with your power here to-night."

The other said: "You must be able to hear between my lines what is not spoken in them. There is the truth. If you are the man, in your ears the truth must thunder." Then the young Jew pleaded:

"Come, think of the roaring millions of men in

the centuries to come! You have but to lift your finger now and shape a billion opportunities in those undreamed-of years!"

"I must think of my present business," said the old millionaire.

And still the Jew was not dismayed. "Your present business is already past. Let the past bargain with the past and decay in its own place. But you begin and work at the future. For the future is yours."

"It will ruin me," protested the old man.

"And if you have no soul," answered the other, "you are already ruined. But I have come to save you." As he spoke, the rich man saw the wonderful kindness in his eyes, like a thousand stars on a summer's night shining. "You are already dead, and this is the death you have to fear. I tell you that by my plan you shall conquer death and live in men until the day of doom. For gold properly put is the happiest thing on earth. Do you die and want all men miserable? Or do you live and want all men happy?"

And when he had finished rebuking him, the old man spoke and said: "My strange new thought: tell me that I want all men happy."

"Then," said the other, sternly, "you know my plan. Work at it."

And again a silence fell between them.

The big, hale, gray old man took up a tablet and pencil, which always lay near him wherever he went. He bent above the paper, tapping it with the pencil. Then he drew a rough outline, which was the United States, and split it crosswise and lengthwise. And he wrote rapidly, "Eastern branch—Western—Northeast—Northwest—Southeast—Southwest—Central," and stopped. Now, the Northeast section included New York City, and under it he wrote the name of "Parsons, General Manager." Under each of the other sections also he quickly wrote a man's name. He forgot the young Jew, gazing steadily at him. He tapped on the paper and sucked at his shaggy gray mustache for many minutes. "Yes," he said at last, "it might do. We would take over the Government's Employment Agency first. They have been losing too much money on it."

A sound old clock chimed half past two and the pencil scratched energetically on, pouring out rows of figures and groups of compact names. The bobbing pencil seemed merry at the new task. The young Jew smiled in the silence. And suddenly the old man looked up, sharp and forceful.

"This isn't all due to you," he said. "For you must know that every rich man, such as I, thinks often in his old age about where and how to leave his money, and I have thought it over many times—many times. Only your idea—it hit me to-night.

There is something novel, something practical about it. I could train my own labor that way, and be always sure of competent workmen. I could spread out the business to take in other trades, and guarantee to furnish other men in other businesses with trained labor." His eyes glowed and he stopped to make a note of two allied trades. His huge head shone in the light; his eyes seemed rimmed with a kind of fervor as he tapped, scratched busily, and tapped, tapped again with his pencil, staring straight into the dancing fire, or bending, burly shouldered, above the little sheets of paper. Once he chuckled and remarked: "I will give them a Christmas present that will amaze them—my men, I mean. I can see my general manager—he's Parsons—when he reads this letter. It will be sent to him to-morrow morning."

"You will use your own men," said the Jew.

"Certainly! For they are the best men on earth to-day. Why not?"

And he went on at his scribbling like a man lost in a dream.

Outside, the wind and rain chilled and drowned the heavy night, battling in the skies to keep the dawn from ever coming. Inside, the clock, with its robust old heart, ticked away its monotonous greeting to the flying seconds of time. "Tick"—the second had come; "Tock"—it had gone. And the old man wrote; and the young Jew smiled.

Once the visitor interrupted: "You do what you do because you wish to?"

The old man merely nodded. He did not look up. If he had done so he would have seen the lips of the young Jew part slowly, his cheeks go paler than ever, his head sink, and the flame die out of his tired eyes. But the Jew did not speak, and the old man figured on; and the night hung close over the rich man's house. "In the right hands the right task had been put," murmured the stranger. Then, in louder tones, he said: "I must go."

The old man heard. "Go now? Impossible! You must stay here to-night."

But the young Jew shook his head sadly. "My work is done here. I must go."

"But the night is terrible—" protested the other. And the Jew said simply:

"No night is terrible to me."

And still the other kept saying: "But you shall stay and help me with this plan! You are a great man."

And the young Jew smiled weakly and replied: "You are a greater man for your plan than I am." He lifted his head. "I must go."

"Where must you go to-night?" asked the old man. And the young man answered: "Not far."

Then the millionaire rose to his feet, so that the two stood looking at each other. The firelight jumped radiantly over the gray head and the great

shoulders, and a brilliance flamed in the old man's eyes like a victorious design. He stood up gladly before the haggard Jew, all wan and spent and lean.

"And you will send the letter?" asked the young man steadily.

To which he said: "I shall send seven letters."

"It is a sign," said the Jew. And they were silent, till the Jew put on his greatcoat and walked toward the door. At this the old man was for begging him again to stay, but the other checked him with his hand:

"Would you like to see another sign?"

They stood in the glass door, by the lawn, and he pointed upward through the night to where, above the rain, a great star was shining.

"A star!" cried the rich man. "A star on a night like this!"

But the young Jew did not answer. He looked at his host and said: "Is your soul sweetened inside your body? Do you believe in your daughter's spirit? And do you believe in mercy and charity? Do you really believe in these things? For you see that star only because you believe in it. Otherwise, there is no star. You must believe, believe. These are my last words. All the rest of your life you must believe in what has happened here to-night. Use your strength to work out your beliefs; but see to it that you believe in a strength

above that strength. Though the tongues of men clash in angry denial like the beating seas, I tell you this world is a world of souls, and there is such a thing as a soul. Though men through forty ages have forgot their souls, I tell you there are souls. The spirit rules; and the body rots. And through all the years of your life now, you must remember these things. Work and believe!"

. And the young Jew vanished in the darkness.

The clear air cooled the old man's brain so that he stood in the late night and thought. His great chest heaved with his breathing so that his gray beard rose and fell. His big hands were clenched in unconscious purpose. His eyes stared wide into the still blackness. Like a rushing dream, full of wheeling and flashing lights, the strange incidents of this miraculous encounter swept into his brain: the advent of this startling wanderer, the uncanny words, spoken without thought, with which he himself had greeted him—"Look at that man!"—the weird building of that spirit-land bubble he had known to be his own little Margaret, the unfolding of the amazing scheme, the luster of that incredible star.

The vast night leaned above him as his dream overwhelmed him; yet he felt strangely peaceful and calm. What had happened to him? Was it all a fantasy, full of an inscrutable meaning? A bewildering spell with some implacable intention in its exercise? Something unreal . . . something to

guess at? Something from another world, from a mysterious land, compelling him at Christmas time to remold his scheme of life . . . and death? Thoughts, thoughts, millions of thoughts, immense, terrific and confounding, marched across his mind. Thoughts of life and death, of his millions, of his plan. His plan! He turned and went into his house, filled with a great sweetness and happiness of soul like unto nothing which had ever before befallen him in all his Christmases.

"William," he said to his valet as he sat on the edge of his bed, "you don't know that old age is really a second childhood. But it is. Somehow, we old men swing round and come back to our youth."

"Yes, sir," said William patiently. For William was sixty years old.

"Youth!" went on his master, looking out his window. "Glamour! Not knowing that things are impossible to begin with, but going in and doing them anyhow. All my life I've been learning what was foolish and what wasn't foolish. And now—deliberately—I am going to be a fool. Isn't that youth again? Triumph of spirit over matter! I am snapping my fingers at every rule of 'business' on earth; every 'business man' in the world is going to declare that I'm crazy, and prophesy my ruin. Why? Simply because I'm letting the youth

in me have its way—the youth and all it stands for—ideals, generosity, poetry, wild schemes, the vigor to back them up!”

“Very well, sir.”

“Wait a minute. Do you know why I am a happy old man this Christmas? Don’t say ‘No sir.’ It is because I’ve got illusions—*illusions*, William—and also the practical strength to carry them out. What I needed in life was an illusion, a dream. I had all the rest of the equipment. I had to have something crazy and magnificent to do. And a man came along and gave it to me to-night.”

“A man came here to-night, sir?”

“Yes.”

“Good Lord, sir!”

At the words, the old man stared at his valet as if fascinated. An idea came to him quickly, plunging him into a stupid rumination. The last thing he said as he lay between the sheets was: “Perhaps you’re right, William.” And he slept.

In the morning, as he served the coffee, William coughed a few times, then remarked:

“Merry Christmas, sir.”

The old millionaire glowed like a giant Santa Claus. “Well, well. It has a pleasant sound this time, hasn’t it?” he said. “Your present is in that top dresser drawer, William.”

The valet did not move for a moment. Then he coughed again: "A—er—man was found dead on the place this morning, sir."

The cup stopped at his master's lips. "What man?" he asked.

"A—er—strange man, sir. Head groom reported it, sir. He died down at the stables."

"A young Jew? Poor?" continued the millionaire quickly.

"Yes, sir."

"What time?"

"The doctors say about three or four o'clock, sir."

"Down at the stables, eh? Where was he found?"

The voice that answered did not seem like the old valet's voice, so strange, so old, so awful were the words:

"In one of the mangers, sir."

DUX FEMINA FACTI

THE first scene, of course, he could never know. That occurred when he was three days old. One soft summer's afternoon, with the curtains half-drawn in the great hall on the second floor, the whole old mansion as noiseless as midnight, they brought in his fair young mother in her coffin. About her, in that artificial dusk, the tall candles were lit; the prayers for her soul were said. At last, alone by her side, sat his father. Three days before, he had been gay, young, handsome. Now a grief like lightning had seared and blasted him. His hair was white; his face marked with deep lines; his body bowed down; his nerves shaken to pieces forever. He sat hunched up in the great leather chair, staring with maddened eyes at the candles, munching his fingers, mumbling threats to himself—threats against God, threats to follow her, threats against the physicians, against the wide and sunny world.

And what happened after that he was never to know: how his father left California and went East to a place called New York; how the physicians there bickered and tested and finally committed his father to a sanitarium; how the lawyers bickered (for his father was very rich); how instructions were sent to old McNab (along with a

penciled, pathetic line from his father—*"Keep the boy away from the world, so he will never know the sorrows of life in the world)."*

No. His memory knew only this beautiful garden; the stately figure of old McNab; the negress who cooked for them both, a coal-black creature who never talked or listened; and of course, the little boys who came and played with him. He had not known the woman who nursed him; only, at times, a warm, soppy odor would stir his brain with strange surmises as of something he had once experienced but had forgotten.

To him, old McNab was the most extraordinary person on earth. The gaunt figure at least six feet two, dressed always in shiny black—black satin knee breeches, black silk stockings, black satin cut-away coat—stalking silently up and down the garden paths, turning upon the child every minute a leaden, unfriendly eye, never ceased to fascinate him. There was another mysterious attraction about the old Scotch butler: he was deaf and dumb. But, as if to make up for the loss of these faculties, his expressionless eyes were everywhere, overlooking nothing. So he paraded in his knee breeches, in and out amongst the shrubbery, his wrinkled, colorless face betraying nothing of what his Calvinistic, canny brain thought. He carried a long, slim bamboo cane with which he used to slap the children when they did something he did not like.

The cane was harmless; he used it simply because he could not talk. A whack with the cane, a frown, an upraised finger, did well enough. McNab had been in the boy's garden forever it seemed, and it seemed just as likely that he would stay there forever.

The boy vaguely considered him as thousands of years old.

The boy did not know in what relation McNab stood to him; and there was no way of his finding out, for McNab could not have told him even if McNab had known. And McNab did not know.

The old man had sat down with a frightful face the night he had received the note from the boy's father: "*Keep the boy away from the world, so he will never know the sorrows of life in the world.*" He had lighted a long cheroot and given himself over to a four hours' study of the world; he had first puckered his face up beyond all previous records of puckering and then he had reviewed all the hard-and-fast rules of human conduct that had ever been pounded into his Scottish consciousness. Bitter experience, stringent dogma, close-guarded thinking, a violent passion for discipline, a horror of the laxity of human ways, ancient saws, pelleted wisdom, ancestors and surroundings of a hard, dry, chilly character—all these entered into the shaping of the old man's resolution. He smoked methodically, lighting one cheroot from another; when he

had consumed eight of them, it was about midnight. Creaking starchily, he arose at last, crossed over to a little table in the very room where the boy's mother had lain all pale and queenly in her earthly death, and wrote:

Edward Braxton, Esq.:

Sir:—Your instructions received. I have been evolving a mature and deliberate plan whereby your son may escape the calamities and iniquitous influences of this world of sin and sorrow. I think you will agree with me that the child needs natural companionship in order to maintain in him his health and spirits. I also think you will agree with me—it has been my experience—that up to the age of, say, four or four and a half, the natural innocence of childhood is uncorrupted; and therefore I am planning to allow the boy the companionship of boys of this age, but only inside the garden wall, where I can keep my eye on them. I shall be very particular in the matter of choosing cleanly and healthy children, so as to keep physical as well as mental and moral contamination away from him. I will arrange to inaugurate the plan to-morrow, if possible. I shall give his playmates some slight pecuniary reward and this will be itemized in the monthly statement.

Yours obediently,

ANGUS McNAB.

To which, in thirteen days, he received a reply from the head of the sanitarium:

Kindly do not address Mr. Braxton further on the subject of his boy. You understand, we exercise our judgment as to what communications our patients may be allowed to read, and we consider

mention of Mr. Braxton's family affairs to be dangerous to him at this time. You can address either his attorneys or myself.

Angus McNab wrote no more, but every afternoon at two-thirty, his bamboo cane rapped the little boys into line before a wicket let into the high garden wall. His cold, saturnine gaze ran over them. Smack! with the bamboo cane—with every smack, a playmate for that afternoon was chosen by Angus McNab for the little boy inside the garden. Every afternoon at four-thirty, the stiff old mute again took up his position outside the gate, a stack of bright new silver quarters in his hand. Each tad as he came out held up his tiny palm and the terrible old specter in black satin knee breeches dropped into it a flashing coin. Thus the news spread around the town among the poor that the young ones could not only get to see inside the rich man's garden (of which mysteriously beautiful tales were told) but could also get a quarter apiece, just for playing with the rich man's boy.

No wonder there were tales about that garden; even in that flowery land it harbored miracles of bloom. A great wall ten feet high and four feet thick, made of stone buried beneath clinging cushions of crimson rambler, enclosed its entire twenty acres, except on the northeast side—where the massive brick mansion sprawled irregularly. The hall wherein the boy's mother had lain gave onto

the garden; there was a wide balcony there, running along to two smaller rooms. In the nearer of these, the old Scot slept—guarding the portal of the farther one, wherein the boy slept. For, thus placed, the bedrooms faced the southwest and got the sun after midday. The cook used one room besides the kitchen. The others of the twenty rooms in the great house were locked. So almost all of the boy's waking hours were spent in that always pleasant garden. There was nowhere else for him to go; and, besides, he loved the garden.

There were clumps of incense-bearing trees, brooks of deep blue shadows wherein lay other waving shadows of trout, little wild regions of rough rocks, paths through hillocks of pine; then suddenly one came upon graveled walks, trim fountains, open greensward spotted with box and privet peacocks, bulldogs, horsemen, mandarins; there were banks of barbaric poppies, flanking quiet pools upon which tiny yachts could be sailed; there were odorous arbors quilted in foreign flowers, fringes of baking geraniums, clumps of Cape jessamine with its pervading perfume, dainty pink forests of crêpe myrtle, processions of gorgeous oleanders, old-fashioned patches of quaint blossoms. There were orange trees, fig trees, peach trees, plum trees, grape and canteloupe vines trained espalier-fashion along the great south wall. The fruit was for the children to eat; there was a sand pit for

them to play in; there were a half-dozen see-saws, a whole fleet of little boats, jumping-ropes, toy drums, Indian suits, tepees, tomahawks, bows and arrows; there was an asphalt yard marked off for hop-scotch. There was everything a child could want. But the whole accent of the walled-in place was sharp upon the note of childhood; no other adult person save the deaf-and-dumb theorist ever traversed its walks, indulged in its air, observed its beauties.

It was distinctly a place of children, for children; a whole child's world inside that garden wall. And the boy was in love with that life of play; indeed, he played all the time there. In the mornings he played by himself, crooning. In the afternoons he played with the little boys whom Angus McNab admitted.

The morning of his sixth birthday, the boy was surprised to see the old man leave his seat at the far end of the long breakfast table and descend upon him, a card in one hand and a bird cage in the other. A becking, flirting little canary was in the "*Many happy returns of the day*"), but as he could cage. There was something on the card (it said: not read. it did not matter. McNab would not have taught him to read. Said he to himself: "You can't tell what sort of books he might be coming across that would send his soul to damnation."

When the next summer came around, he was given a puppy; the next brought a pair of rabbits. And so on.

Every time the child received an unusual gift of this sort he was highly curious; he knew it was consequent upon some extraordinary occasion. But there was no way of his finding out from McNab. He kept his ears and wits at work among his playmates, however, and at length he concluded that this must be his "birfday" or his "Crismus"—if indeed "birfday" and "Crismus" were not the same thing. He understood that "they" gave things at such times, from hearing his companions say: "Whajjuh get for your birfday?" or "Whajjuh get for Crismus?"

The "birfday" part of it was vaguely connected in his mind with a peculiar saying, which cropped out again and again in their play: "I'm four goin' on five." Never had any of them said anything different: "I'm four goin' on five."

So when they asked him: "What're you?" he would answer with a shout: "I'm four goin' on five." He answered thus even when he was fifteen years old.

Though the years went on, this garden constituted to him his world: his little companions were always to him what people outside the wall call "human society."

"Ess p'ay ring-around-a-rosey," he would chant. The others would gather around, begin whirling and singing:

"Ring-around-a-rosey
Pocket full of posies."

Or:

Yunnon B'idge is fallin' down, fallin' down, fallin' down;
Yunnon B'idge is fallin' down—
Dance o'er my Yady Yee."

Sometimes doubts and marvels about the world beyond the wall would assail him, and he would ask the others where they went after they left the garden.

"Home an' tiss papa and mamma and doe to bed."

He wondered what kissing papa and mamma was like. It was probably something they had to do, which it was not necessary for him to do.

"Where's *oor* papa and mamma?"

"I d'know." He made the answer in which every child (and every philosopher) takes refuge.

Sometimes he would wonder what had become of the playfellows who had come and gone; never to come back: "Where's ole Bug-Eye? Where's Harry-Harry-Rick-stick-stairy?" he would ask.

But these were names of boys beyond their ken, so they gave the old answer of childhood (and of philosophy): "I d'know."

It was a comfortable world; a world sane enough and simple enough to dismiss its perplexities with an "I don't know."

Sometimes he looked at himself in the pier-glass and noticed how tremendously larger he was than his little friends; but there was no way he could prevent it, just as there was no way he could account for it. He supposed it was merely some property individual to himself.

So the years passed; and in his innocence and his baby-talk he came to be twenty-one.

Then, one fine autumn afternoon, he threw himself down upon his back in the grass beneath a high apple tree. The last little boy had said good-by. Angus had paid him off at the gate, had stepped in and locked it, had looked down the gravel path some twenty feet to where his young master lay; and with an inward smirk of approval he had gone into the house to read Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" until dinner-time. He hemmed and hawed a great deal with Mr. Hooker, and so he took no notice of the boy.

The boy lay gazing, relaxed and dreamy, up into the laden branches of ripe yellow fruit which arched above him, above the gravel path and over the wall into the road beyond. A bright blue bird flitted amid the foliage; bees, loth to go home, wandered over the apples listlessly.

Suddenly he heard a noise in the road—then a rapid, tearing sound. Some one was climbing up the face of the stone wall, using the rose vines for a hasty foothold. The next second, over the top of the wall shot a vigorous, silk clad leg.

The boy jumped to his feet. A hand, arm, shoulder and then a companion leg appeared.

"Ouch!" said an impatient, curt little voice.

Then a strange creature, not like the negress cook—pink and white and more beautiful—sat up there before him. It stood on tiptoe, reached for an apple, bit it and reached for another.

"Um, um," said the creature.

A strange thrill ran through the boy. He put out a trembling hand, stepped back into the path, and cried: "Oo better tate tare. The vines'll 'tick oo!"

The creature looked down. "Good gracious!" she screamed gently. Then she closed her skirts about her ankles, for she saw a handsome six foot youth standing below her with arms outstretched.

"Don't oo be afraid. Oo tan have all ve apples oo want 'n' I'll det oo a bastik to put 'em in," he said consolingly.

"Well, of all the—what's the matter with you?" she began sharply. She had black eyebrows and a soft, arch look.

He had never heard anyone talk in this way; but instinctively he felt that it was the way an old,

old person—like McNab—would talk—that is, if McNab only *would* talk. He had the child's quick perception of an elder's disdain. He knew that the creature was expressing disdain—that the creature did not like him, that he had done something wrong.

He had a sharp feeling of being sobered, of being other than himself. But he remembered in a flash an old conversation with a chum who had spoken of a sister: "What's a sister?"—"Like us, only they wear skirts"—"What's skirts?"—"Like your cook, y'know."

He resolved to be polite in spite of her tone of voice. "Is oo a sister?"

"Can't you say 'you?' " she sneered.

"You," he said promptly.

"Yes, I happen to be a sister. My brother's four going on five and he talks just like you."

"I'm four going on five," he shouted. There was no mistaking the pleasure in his eyes as he found something familiar in her talk. "What're you?"

"I'm nineteen." She looked about hastily in a cold panic and came near jumping sheer off the ten foot wall into the road. "Gee! Crazy as a loon," she murmured.

He saw her glance, ran and got a ladder, placed it, and soon was standing beside her. One moment first, he gazed out across the open country in amaze-

ment. He was breathless, heated to a frenzy. It was the first time he had ever seen the outer world; he had never even thought of such a thing until this sister came.

As a teasing hand which has covered the answer to a puzzle slowly relinquishes the solution, revealing it letter by letter, so the next hour, slipping by, minute by minute revealed life to the walled-in boy. The girl had come over the wall at a quarter to five.

She would have fled now at once had it not been for the sincere adoration in his next words, words already dropping their baby notes: "They never gave me anybody to play wif like you—all my life I only had little bits o' boys."

No woman can mistake or despise adoration. She was softened, but she said spitefully: "Well, I'm certainly not an itsy bitsy boy. I'm a great, big, grown up girl."

For the first time he felt it was a reproach, an ignoble thing, to be a little boy. He regretted that he was one. Then, hoping to please her, he begged with a laugh: "Tum on—"

"Come on," she corrected.

"Come on and play leap-frog—lessus!"

She became tart again. "Of course not."

"Why?" She had the most puzzling way, he thought.

"It isn't right—for grown-up girls."

"Right?"

"Moral—moral—moral! Heavens and Earth!"

She was exasperated.

"Are you moral?"

"Of course."

Child-like, he began chanting: "I wanna be moral, too! I wanna be moral, too!" Then anxiously: "Is it some kind of a game?"

The little ironic smile which had never left her face during the interview (except the one time when she was afraid he was a lunatic) became still more ironic and rather less of a smile. "To think," she taunted, "to think that you are the fellow worth five million dollars!"

She announced the sum with obvious relish, with an involuntary softening of her voice.

"Is that much?"

"Yes, you big"—she started to say booby, but suddenly smiled and said—"boy. That's a great deal of money."

"Money?"

"Money," she affirmed in a peculiar and nasty tone.

"Do you want to play wiv it?" he asked eagerly.

She threw back her head and laughed, so shrilly, so hysterically and for so long a time that if Angus McNab had not been deaf he might yet have saved his ward. Finally, with hard, dry eyes, she looked at him: "So that I can play with just one-twenty-

tieth of that much I am selling myself to a drunkard, little boy."

It was all Greek to him. "Turn on down—Come on down in the garden and tell me what is a drunkard, and how you sell yourself."

As he helped her down the ladder, her hand in his, her cheek once pressed against his. Strange waves of blood flowed up to his head and down again. His eyes softened, and bashfully, yet wildly—not knowing what he was doing or why—he caught her in his arms and kissed her as she reached the ground.

"Oh," she screamed, shoving him away. "Don't you dare!" Then she looked at him, saw that he was hanging his head shamefacedly, and was at once reminded of her superiority over him. "Well, this is a lovely party," she giggled merrily. "Now, you bad boy, sit 'way over there and I'll tell you anything you want to know about the great big world I came from beyond the garden wall." She sat down on the grass and spread out her skirts.

He lay near her, his great blond head propped up on his sturdy fists. The red sun spread a passionate dye across the trees and grass and fountains. Her skin seemed miraculously fair and soft to him and her eyes seemed swimming with kindness. He had never in his life wanted anything so much as he wanted her for a playmate. But he understood now quite well that she belonged to a

different world, a queer world full of fascinating ideas.

"You don't play—outside the wall—do you?" he asked softly.

"No. We do everything except play." Her tone was just as soft. Then, satirically: "Of course, we play bridge."

"Yunnon B'idge?"

"No. Whist—gambling."

"What's that?"

"Playing, you know, and taking money if you win."

He was astounded. "Take money from your playmates? What for?"

She merely laughed. "Aren't you a card, though?" she giggled. "What's your first name?"

"I d'know. Richie."

"Richie? You mean Richard?"

"I d'know. That's what the boys call me. What's your name?"

"My name is Eva Lamton. They call me Eve."

He dug his toes into the grass. "Tell me about you."

She smoothed her skirts and began: "Well, I live about two miles from here and I came out bicycling—"

"I gotta bicycle."

"And as I was skinning along your wall I saw that apple-tree. 'Um!' I said, 'I must have an

apple.' So I leaned the wheel up against the rose vine, stood on the saddle, gave a jump and here I am."

"What's a drunkard?" he demanded suddenly.

She frowned and lost her merry air at once.

"I know what you mean now. You mean Mr. George, the man I'm engaged to. He's worth two hundred and fifty thousand and he drinks."

"Huh, that's nothing. So do I."

"But he drinks—poison."

"No!" he exclaimed incredulously. "Eddie Mann says poison'll kill you."

"Yes. It will kill you."

"Why does he do it, then?"

"Oh, to pass the time, I suppose."

This puzzled him. "Why don't he play, instead?"

"I told you we don't play—out there. We've got more important, more serious things to do. Play is just for little children."

Again he felt the sting of that reproach. After silence and thought he remarked: "Ain't it funny how you came in here wivvout—*without*—anybody asting you and tell me all these things? Does you do that everywhere?"

"Oh, *no*."

"Does other womens do that?"

"Oh, *no*."

"Oh, they don't!" He seemed to consider this response as if it had upset some notion he had con-

ceived. But he really could get nowhere with any of it in his reasoning; it all seemed a jumble of magic. All he could do to satisfy himself was, child-like again, to ask questions. He squirmed on the grass and pleaded: "Tell me some more about the people what drinks poison and takes money from their playmates and sells themselves for money and don't play at all—and all, and all about it!"

It was a quarter of six. "Really," she said, "I ought to be getting home. I've got to go to a dance at the Wilmington's to-night."

He did not know what she was talking about; but then, that was true of almost all she said.

"Really, I must go," she remarked again. "I've stayed longer than I ought. I must go."

A pain came into his throat that never before had been there. "I think you're awful nice," he began, "—nicer than anything I know. You're so pretty and soft; and you know so many things I don't know. But somehow I don't understand much. All I know is that I hurt all over—since *you* came."

She looked her prettiest, but underneath was the hard little woman of the world. "No doubt I ought to sympathize with you. In a way, of course, I do. But, you know, you're *so* stupid."

He stared at her longingly, but said nothing.

She spoke: "It must be monotonous—in here—

just to play, play, play all the time, and do nothing else, or know anything else. Monotonous,"—she explained—"dull, stupid; make you tired in the head, you know."

This very thought had been vague in his mind ever since she had refused to play leap-frog with him. He decided to attempt to tell her just how he felt.

"I want to go out wiv—*with*—you, outside of here," he stammered, painfully. "But you must wait for me,"—his heart ached keenly as he said it—"until I grow up, you know."

Then occurred quite the most horrible thing in their entire talk. Although it pleased her to have him admit her superiority, it angered her to have him persist in considering himself a child of "four going on five."

"Why," she said vindictively, "you big goose, *you are already grown up—you're grown up now.*"

He gazed at her a moment, turned pale, then burst out crying. "Aint I a little boy any more?" he sobbed.

"*Any more?* Why, you haven't been a little boy for ten or twelve years," she explained, a bit frightened and a bit disgusted at the havoc her words had caused.

"I don't know what you mean," he wailed. "I know I was a little boy until you came over the wall." Sob after sob burst from his breast.

Momentarily the sight was sickening, as the feeling on both sides was sickening.

"There, there!" She came over and patted his head, smoothed his cheek. At her touch, as if he had taken an opiate, the querulous activity of his mind was lulled. His feelings got the uppermost. He lapsed into a silly sensation of delight.

"Really," she remarked brightly, "I *must* get out of here. I am doing *altogether* too much damage." She smiled, wiped her hands with her handkerchief, adjusted her hair, pulled her belt into place. As she started up the ladder, he got to his feet to assist her. "No thanks—you needn't," she said archly. "I got in here without any help and I can get out again all by myself."

At the sight of her going, his lower lip trembled; tears came into his eyes no matter how much he tried to keep from crying. "Oo'll tum back?" he asked.

Again the arch smile. "Say, 'You'll come back?' and I might."

This time he almost strangled with the effort of the new talk, but he managed: "You'll come back? Oh, please, please, please come back!"

From the top of the wall she leaned over toward him intently. "You, with five million!" She tried to pass off her seriousness with a laugh. "Well. Richie, I think I *may*." She turned her back,

seized a long branch of the tree and prepared to swing herself out into the road.

"Wait! Wait!" came a choked voice behind her. "Say it again—Eve. Say it again that I ain't a little boy any longer. Say it again that I'm grown up—grown up like you—grown up like people out in the world yonder. Say it again that playing all the time is stupid—"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Eve in mock surprise, "did I really say all that?" Then she disappeared over the wall.

"Eve! Eve!" he called. He waited there for an answer. Dark came. Then came McNab, who led him in to dinner.

After the meal—which he did not touch—he went straight to bed, where he tossed feverishly for hours. He reviewed himself, his garden, Eve, and her world beyond; and though he did not have the language to tell what he knew, yet in his brain and in his body and in his soul he did know that forever she had stripped him of his innocence and had given him nothing in its place. That she had taken *his* world out from under his feet and had left him with nothing except curiosity. That the days of his life as he had led it up till then were silly in the eyes of the world and were—what did she call them?—"monotonous, stupid and dull." A horror, partly mental but also partly physical, racked him with revulsion; what he felt that night against the

world nobody on earth but a young lad could tell you—no man-of-the-world, no woman of any description, could ever tell you. The black disgust that shook him was only overpowered by the black horror that quieted him—

And then, toward midnight, it was Curiosity, that whisky of life, which overpowered all. As the great clock struck twelve in the hall where his mother had lain, he let himself over the balcony rail, dropped to the ground, sped through the cool night air to where the ladder lay hidden after Eve had used it; he climbed the wall and walked away.

His heart went wild. He was half mad. He had no further use for Eve, didn't care whether she came back or not. He wanted to see and to know. And the stars shone sweetly down upon him and his baby-talk.

So "Richie" Braxton went out into the world, without a cent in his pocket; and after he was all soiled, and bruised and beaten, and made cruel, suspicious, resourceful, vindictive, tenacious—Heaven knows what—

Eve George heard of his success and said: "I made a man of him."

THE LITTLE TIN GODS

To tell the truth, this should not be called the story of the Little Tin Gods, for it concerns, after all, only one. This is the story of one Tin God, of one who did all along what somebody told him to do—a Tin God who did what was expected of him and who, when the time came, could do nothing else.

J. Wallington Beardsleigh lived in upper Fifth Avenue and had a wife, an imported touring car, an electric runabout and three clubs. With a ruddy, handsome smile he wore fifty-three years lightly upon his trim shoulders and his gray head. In matters of dress he was most particular; his grey mustache was neat and slightly waxed; his pearl grey suede gloves were faultless; his black broadcloth overcoat showed the fashionable silk lapels of London and Paris; and above all, the subdued tones of his business dress were enlivened smartly by a bit of bright cravat—a *chic*, clever youthful cravat, a cravat which changed its color fastidiously with the changing weeks, a gay, dashing little cravat which made a fine distinction between dark *cerise* and *vieux rose*. He “wore” a costly walking-stick and permitted himself a delicate perfume upon the lapel of his waistcoat.

He was a *bon vivant*, a teller of sly, good stories, an affecter of the fashions. He carried himself always with a bit of an air whether he happened to be at the race track or in a theatre aisle. He was a first-nighter, an *habitué*, a chorus girl *connoisseur*; a *farceur*, a *raconteur*—really, it requires a great deal of French to describe exactly Mr. J. Wallington Beardsleigh. Possibly you have met that sort of a person before.

Success breathed from him benignantly, from his pomaded hair, from his carnation boutonniere. He was liked by every one—even by his wife, whom he met punctually, when she was in town, once every twenty-four hours. He was liked because of his pleasing personality and because he was successful . . . the president of a Fifth Avenue Trust Company, the jolly, dashing “Wallie” Beardsleigh. Did anybody say anything about the Beardsleigh of fifteen years ago, the lawyer who put through the big, crooked deal? Not in New York; not in the grey old lascivious city. It applauds such things.

To-day he was on top—the envious said through cunning and toadying. When his trim figure alighted from the runabout in front of the Pocahontas Building each noon, he would walk briskly into the offices, nod cheerily right and left and ensconce himself smartly in his private room—a po-

lite bluff by a smug crook, commented the envious.

Let me describe this room to you; it was such a satisfactory sort of a private office for President J. Wallington Beardsleigh of the Pocahontas Trust. For one thing, every bit of furniture in it was slick and shiny; everything was covered with a glistening, pleasing veneer, everything was polished consummately. It was an ornamented little office, an embellished, adorned, decorated, furnished, gilded, varnished, enameled, lacquered, little office. There was a great deal of oil and shellac in this private room. And it was an easygoing place, peaceful, placid, calm, quiet, almost demure; an unexcited, composed, unruffled sort of place. The telephone bell was a velvet drumming; the office servants passed in and out on noiseless feet, deferring humbly to Mr. Beardsleigh. There in tranquillity the placid, well-groomed president would sit down and open his morning mail. At the end of an hour, perhaps, he would reach for the telephone and call up Some One in Wall Street to ask a few questions, possibly to make a luncheon engagement. Then he would don his smart hat, pause to adjust his scarf in a gilt mirror, and step out to his waiting car. It was in such unostentatious ways as these that the Pocahontas was managed.

At three-thirty in the afternoon he dropped into one of his clubs for a moment or two of chat while

his touring-car was being brought around from the garage. From there perhaps he was whirled off to the races down on Long Island, if nothing kept him in town. At another club he dined; and in the evening, as a poor, tired business man, he went to the theatre.

You probably do not recall October twenty-first, a certain Monday, in a certain year. But it was worth while remembering for a number of reasons; for one, "The Black Spaniel," a musical show, opened that night on Broadway. J. Wallington Beardsleigh was there. So was Johnings Ballue.

"Did you notice the little blonde, second from the left?" asked Beardsleigh, in the foyer, after the first act. He smoothed down his waistcoat and trimmed his mustache with a light finger, his legs a bit apart, his manner that of a *vieux chien*. "The one they've given that extra little dance all to herself?"

"Yass," was the affected, drawling answer of Ballue. You could never have told from Ballue's looks that he was vice-president of a bank. He had more the air of a British novelist than of a director in the Harrison Trust. "Her name's Creme Condiss. That is, she *says* it is. I ran up to one of the dog towns and happened, y'know, to meet her. By the way, Beardsleigh, take lunch with me to-morrow, can you? Come down to the bank

first. I've got a rare find, by George! You'll envy me."

"What is it?"

"Oh, nothing but a piece of Colonial china—I won't tell you what—upstate farmhouse—octogenarian—top pantry shelf—his mother's mother had owned it." The connoisseur rubbed his hands in suppressed joy. "One of these things that the children had been making mud pies in, y'know. Oh!" he held up his manicured hands—"that glaze! that coloring! M-m!" he paused. They were approached by a squat elderly individual who bulged like a black-and-white beetle in his evening clothes.

"Haw, Pirkit!" The languid Ballue paused to say.

"Well, well, Pirkit, old boy," shouted Beardsleigh.

Pirkit, president of still another bank, was hard of hearing, and, like many a person so afflicted, he had the large, bleak, impassive eye of a goat. His nose betokened a constancy of rich dining. He held a fat little hand behind one ear.

"What do you fellers think of Arciturus in the third to-morrow? A mile and a quarter? Heh? Good, I say. Heh? You get on Bonus Sum to-day. Heh? I say, fifty to one is purty near as good as the Street. Heh? Rippin' good weather for sport, too."

"He cleaned up a cool ten thousand on him to-

day," murmured Ballue to Beardsleigh under his breath. The goat eyes never blinked in their expressionless greed.

"Lucky old dog," roared Wallie jovially. "Come around and deposit your pocket money in the Pocahontas."

Pirkit grinned. "Pocahontas, heh? Think I'm a chump? Let Hunniwell have my money? Heh? And me lined up with the opposition. How 'bout you, Ballue?"

The other winked broadly. "Oh, we're staying on the outside altogether. Getting ready to lend you some call money at 90."

The three laughed pleasantly as they journeyed toward the smoking room. There they encountered Davis, of the Picadilly Savings. He was the youngest man of the quartette and he bore unmistakable signs of his feverish youthful enjoyment of the financial game. He was not as yet completely graduated into the smug, amply-abdomened set, though his wife was bending her social energies upon him and had almost brought him into the class of club-dawdlers. Feeling the need of a distinctly classy *forte* of some sort and being by nature afraid of oil paintings or china, he had taken up fox-hunting. He was a stoutish, young man with shifty, burning eyes. His nerves were quite broken down and he gestured jerkily as he talked.

"Hullo!" he said, his arms flopping restlessly. "What d'ye think of the show? Pretty good, huh? Notice the fourth from this end, from the right?" He puffed at a small cigar greedily. "What d'ye think of W. P. going to that figure to-day? Surprised me. Good news, too. I'll buy a half dozen more horses. Just what I needed and I wondered where it was coming from. That's Hunniwell's fine Italian hand though," he declared, boyishly nodding toward Beardsleigh. The latter answered with a smile and turned to Ballue.

"Old man," he said, affectedly, "you remember that green slip we were discussing on that vase"—he pronounced it *voz*—"of mine? The one we thought it absurd to consider Chinese? Well, it is. No. really, I'm not joshing you. It sounds perfectly silly I know; but it is Chinese,—about 1350, too. I don't believe eight hundred was half what the *voz* is worth."

"What d'ye think of Arciturus in the third tomorrow? Heh? Purty good—Heh?" Pirkit was shrieking to Davis. The bell sounded for the second act.

"I'll wager some critic," Ballue was saying with a yawn as he went upstairs with Beardsleigh, "some critic will come out in the morning and say—'The Black Spaniel' is a doggoned success."

"I know an evening paper," chimed in Wallie as

they all laughed, "that will probably head its deep and thoughtful criticism with 'Lucky Dog!'"

At one o'clock it happened that the four of them were back at the club taking a night cap. Beardsleigh stood in the middle of the floor, a popular society novel in his hand, picking flaws in the author's description of a scene. The telephone bell rang out in the hall. They could hear a servant answering. "Yes—he's here." Then the man appeared in the doorway and said:

"Mr. Beardsleigh, you're wanted, sir."

Beardsleigh lifted his neat eyebrows in surprise and crossed the room.

In a moment his voice changed from a languorous, affected "Hello," to a sharp exclamation.

"What! To-morrow! Great God, I can't do it! I'll need all the cash I've got. I—"

There were some short sentences from the other end of the line. Then Beardsleigh went on:

"You're sure? They've gone to smash? Positively? I know, yes, yes. But I'm taking a big risk and all I've got is your word. You—"

The curt informant evidently cut in again.

Beardsleigh almost screamed in reply:

"Oh, God, no! Don't do that, please—please don't! Listen, I—Hello! Hello! Central—give me that number again. You can't get it? Why? Oh, yes he will. Try, for God's sake, try!" After a moment he slammed the receiver down and came

slowly into the room, a sickly smile on his face. His white hands ran through his hair and he moistened his lips, as if to speak. Then he turned on his heel, went out to the desk and wrote a message.

"Call a messenger and send that," he said loudly. When he re-entered to where the three gaping men sat, it was with an air of manifest bravado.

"What in thunder—" began Davis.

Beardsleigh shrugged his shoulders foppishly with a nervous jerk. "There'll be a small portion of Hades turned loose—panic—nothing less. Each of you'll get your dose of medicine here to-night—before you leave—bet you the drinks you do—"

"Heh? What?" shouted old Pirkit with his hand behind his ear, his watery eyes fixed upon the speaker's drawn face.

"Are you joking?" sneered Ballue, twisting a cigar. Beardsleigh had sat down and was pulling at his face; it seemed grotesquely as if he were massaging it.

"I only wish I were," he faltered, his brain busy with other things.

Inside of a quarter of an hour Davis, Ballue and Pirkit were telephoned for by the men who owned them, their banks and their sold-out depositors. There was no use disguising things pleasantly any longer. Each had to face an inordinate demand for money. By some subtle means already the grim

rumor of the panic was spreading over the darkened city. The newspapers had hold of it. The people—what would happen when *they* heard of it? From time to time the four sleepless men got little tidbits of news—later comers brought it in, messengers flew thick and fast, the telephone worked constantly. A half hour, an hour, an hour and a half, two hours went by. Panic had fallen upon the little, white-faced cigar-smokers, the four of them in the sombre room. How they smoked cigars! The ashes fell over their clothes and dusted the tables and the carpets. Their faces grew pallid in the artificial light, the lines bitten deeper upon them as if by some subtle acid. The old clock ticked irritatingly on the silence as each of them thought, thought, thought. Beardsleigh tried to remember what his main securities were; of course, Hunniwell owned them, but what were they? How much cash had he on hand in case of a run? His back sagged forlornly; his eyebrows puckered. He lit a fresh cigar and scratched his pomaded scalp. Three other brains in the room were monotonously going over the same questions. Three other consciences were smitten by the same thought: What would the Big Man do in the morning?

Beardsleigh thought of appealing to Ballue. But at that moment Ballue was wondering if Pirkit could come to his aid; and blunt, old, unemotional Pirkit was ready with a desperate appeal to Davis.

A sight of each one's face prevented each question. They drifted away at last with a nervous round of laughter.

"Well," said Beardsleigh jauntily as he stepped out to his waiting runabout, "*la nuit porte conseil, messieurs!* The thing will look all right by daylight." When he was safe in his car, he broke down and sobbed dryly, his soft hands pressed against his temples. Instead of going home he went to a Turkish bath.

The next day he was in his office by eight thirty for the first time in his life. At nine a little crowd had begun to eddy about the door of the Pocahontas and to drift inside and at half past nine he noted what seemed to him a remarkably large number of people in the lobby. All the time he was trying to get in connection with Hunniwell, but the big man had not as yet turned up at his Wall Street office and no one knew just where to find him. It was thought that possibly he had gone to Washington. Beardsleigh called in a teller.

"What are they doing? Drawing out?" he asked.

The teller nodded.

At ten o'clock he had to ask for police to maintain order. The run had begun.

All that day seemed to Beardsleigh a phantasmagoria of terror, a nightmare of false shapes, grotesque, distorted things that are supposed to come only in fever and delirium. Most awful of

all was the sensation of falseness, recurring dumbly, leadenly, sickeningly—falseness to his trust, falseness among his friends, especially the falseness of the Big Man in time of need, the falseness of the whole foolish panic. He strained at the terrible burden. These things did not come upon him all at once. He went to work quietly, at first, to levy upon his presumable resources, using his old cunning, his high handed aplomb. But the whole city was in a panic. He tried here and there, up-town and downtown, to get assistance, first jokingly to cover his apprehension and then in deadly earnest when he found he was caught. He called up a conservative man, Burlett, who had done him favors in the past.

A dry hard laugh came back over the wire. "I'm sending a man around there now, Mr. Beardsleigh to draw out the three quarters of a million I've got with you people," barked Burlett. "Need it over here. We're apt to have a flurry ourselves."

The instrument dropped from his nerveless hand and clattered to the floor unheeded. His stomach felt peculiarly weak and the top of his mouth was very dry. He licked his lips spasmodically. Three quarters of a million in one check!

Then in earnest began the tossing of his little ship. Things moved past his mental vision uncannily. Faces seemed to him all dead white in color. He remembered talking to some newspaper

men and declaring that he had plenty of money to tide over the little difficulty; he pointed to a pyramid of currency in the middle of the floor behind the three tellers. He tried to address the crowd of depositors once but could not be heard above the clamor, and Brown, his assistant, pulled him roughly down off the chair and thrust him back into his private office. That office! That slick, sleek, well-kept, silent office. Newspapers, telegrams, wearing apparel littered the once spotless floor; his desk had been rumaged through and the documents lay in confusion like so much dry flotsam; the telephone had been crunched under his heel; glasses of water had been spilled; ink had been upset; and over all lay countless fluffy wads of cigar ash.

At noon he sneaked out and got away to lunch; but he did not lunch. He went straight to the bar of the hotel.

"Give me a Manhattan cocktail," he ordered. "No—wait a minute. Make it straight whiskey. Rye."

He gulped down four of them in quick succession.

Should he go back? Laboring under a sort of official impression that he ought to be upon the ground in case anything important in the way of assistance turned up, he decided to return. The police helped him fight his way through the show-

ing, defiant gang. He, President Beardsleigh, who was wont to come down at twelve and trip his way up the silent immaculate steps. How vulgar! he thought as he was hustled along.

On the steps, just before he entered the Pocahontas Building, he stood still, his aesthetic sense thrilling strangely to a certain sensation. He could hear a cry out in the streets, the most ominous of all human sounds, hollow, forlorn, portentous with foreboding, one of those cries in the civilization of the cities which grip the heart—the shout of the newsboys announcing their "Extras." It echoed in his ears as he pushed his way in. It stuck in his brain after he was in his office.

Why had that cry held him? he asked himself. Then he admitted. His soul was a blank check, his nice little dilettante soul, upon which Hunniwell had merely to write his name—and cash it. Soon his depositors, that shuffling, good-natured American mob out there, would know. They would learn that he had sold them out, body and soul. Trust them to find out that their money was gone!

"I've got to get down to the Street," he exclaimed to Brown.

His assistant, a young, clean, square-jawed boy, looked him straight in the eye.

"Yes, I think you'd better," he answered. "You'd better get some of the rest of these miserable thieves to go in with you. Oh, I don't care now.

My job's gone and I'm glad of it. If I didn't have work to do, I'd tell you more about what I think of you—you—great—big—fake!" Beardsleigh's eyes glared. So did Brown's. It seemed to be a day of glaring eyes.

"You wait, sir. I'll pull this out and then, damn me, if I don't attend to you!" ejaculated the president as he left.

In Wall Street he had to pursue Hunniwell around from office to office. The whole place was in an uproar; nobody cared for anyone else. There was no pity, no sympathy, no offer of assistance. Vaguely he caught stray rumors—the Southeastern had failed; the Clearing House had repudiated the Liberty State; the Olympic in Brooklyn had gone to the wall. Excited financiers tore around in a perfect babel of telephonic conversation, personal appeals and importunings. Call money was going up—up—up. Nobody knew where anything stood. Little baldheaded men rushed out of tall grey buildings and burrowed into taller and greyer buildings. Everywhere policemen attempted to manipulate frantic crowds.

At three-thirty Beardsleigh got word with Hunniwell. The Clearing House bankers he had depended upon had "gone back on him," he said. Beardsleigh was to come at midnight to an all-night session of financiers at Delmonico's. Until then he

could do what he liked; what he did, did not matter. So he made his way back to the Pocahontas.

He expected the place to be quiet again after its close at three o'clock. But it wasn't. A long file of people stood along the curb. He questioned a policeman.

"They'll wait there all night for their money," said the officer.

Beardsleigh with a grey face made his way to his office through the pandemonium outside. Brown, bending above a pile of checks, sneered at him in return for his sneer and left him alone. Outside there were yells and moans and the crowd grew thicker; out there in the lobby he heard the shuffle, shuffle of myriads of feet and the droning babble of ominous voices. Once in a while a sharp nasal was raised in argument. He felt the burly, vindictive, restless tumult of the people on the other side of that varnished partition. He could see cabs drive up and wait for some fashionable depositor to enter and get her money—too late. He recalled how motor cars all morning long had coughed as if in angry impatience while their masters drew out their thirty and forty thousands in cash. Beardsleigh chewed his shiny pink nails as he saw the policemen threaten the throng of wide-eyed, curious bystanders. Out of sight of the people himself, he paced the floor, his eyes staring straight ahead, his face in his hands. He recalled a chance

remark he had overheard in the Waldorf bar: "Oh, the little Tin Gods make their little mistakes!" some one had said, gaily.

For the first time, for the very first time he realized where his money had come from. Never before had he known of his depositors, except in a social way, and only one or two of the noted ones at that. But this big, brutal, human thing he had never known, this thing with its deep, menacing voice, its fearful accumulated power, its beastly, indomitable aggressiveness. For the first time the little Tin God heard the thundering awakening of the great Jove. He was appalled whenever he looked into that whirlpool of twitching human faces out there, so full of red blood and vulgar strength. He grew mawkish at the thought of this terrifying power. He knew his bank could not stand.

"Give me my money!" shrieked an old woman. "What do I care what time of day it is? I want my money. I'm a widow and I have to have it!"

The nervous tellers tried to speak in the pandemonium; once, even, angry fists beat against the veneered panels of Beardsleigh's door and he shrank back in spite of himself. It was not that he was afraid, exactly, but this was such a brutal way of forcing the fact home upon him. The fists of his depositors against those varnished boards! What an incongruous, vulgar thing to happen to the President of the Pocahontas Trust!

It was supper time before he got away. Brown sent the books in by a subordinate. They had used three windows all day long, out of sheer bravado.

Paid out, seven million, five hundred thousand dollars!

Beardsleigh drove to the club in wild confusion, his thoughts tumbling about like frightened fish in a net. What was going to happen? What would Hunniwell do? A sudden shock made him aware of what other things were going on around the city. He was just bracing himself at the bar with another drink of whiskey when a member rushed in aghast and exclaimed:

"My God, what a day! Wallie, old man, have you heard what happened? About Ballue? He killed himself this afternoon! Oh, this is awful, awful! Why the hell can't it be stopped?"

Beardsleigh looked at him in a stupor. His wrist fell heavily against the glass of liquor, knocking it over. He clawed his mustache uncertainly and spoke at last:

"You say—he—Ballue—he—"

The other looked up with a fierce light in his eye. "Pirkit has been arrested. Hah! By God, *arrested!* And Davis is in a sanitarium since five o'clock. He broke down when he heard of Ballue, *you know.*"

A dazed silence followed the words. Beards-

leigh's eyes winked weakly and the one hand continued its monotonous clawing at his mustache. He signed to the bartender to refill his glass, and shook the contents down his throat nervously.

"Ballue—d-dead? Pirkit, old Pir—— And Davis?" Whimsically it appealed to his sense of the artistic, once the first dread had passed. How the flies die at the first frost! Ballue, the china collector! The man who had invited him to take lunch with him that day to show him a "find" in Colonial china! Ballue, who had always been so particular that his tie, handkerchief, and hose should exactly match in color! Ballue, who had sold out *his* depositors with a jest! Ballue dead!

But he had too much on his mind just now; his own troubles rushed back redoubled. He looked around the club with a shudder. He could not endure staying there that evening. If he had been dazed before, he now became exactly the opposite, flushed, nervous, in meticulous haste. Arranging to meet several of his directors at the Holland House, he swung out into the night air with a freshly lit cigar between his teeth. The rush of the cool autumn air dispelled the nasty morbid feeling of the club rooms and revived his courage. He tried coaxing himself into a semblance of self-reliance. He had talked the matter over with the directors by telephone and messenger all day; they were as powerless as he, to be sure; but they would

all meet the big chiefs that night at Delmonico's and surely something could be done, surely all those old, grey headed men who had spent their lives in the business would find some way of relief. He did not understand why they hadn't been able to do so long before this. If he were in control of the situation, he surely would have righted matters. He remembered several legal loopholes. Anyway, things might change entirely around by the next day. Maybe there was nothing much to be feared.

As he thought of this he passed by his own bank; he was compelled to do so in order to reach the Holland House. A thin, querulous line of shivering boys and men had already formed before the doors of the Pocahontas; some of them carried lunches and dinner pails, prepared for a vigil of fifteen hours until the bank should open! The sight struck into him like a knife. And the next moment he was thinking of Ballue.

The dinner with the directors was a solemn affair, gotten through with in a sort of nervous woe, eaten as if by four wooden automatons wearing tragic masks. Automatons—each one of them at last felt himself to be exactly that. Automatons! Some uncouth man had long ago called their whole kind by a blunter name—"dummies." Here at the table they would have argued, schemed, devised; only they had done nothing else all day

and were worn out with overmuch futility. It was best to wait, wait and see what the Big Men would do up at Delmonico's later on. And so the meal dragged to the end, sombre and anticipatory.

At two o'clock in the morning Beardsleigh and five of his associates were still waiting in an ante-chamber while Hunniwell and the big chiefs on the other side of the door argued, inspected securities, discussed the market, and argued again. Once in a while he could hear their voices. Every few minutes coffee, cigars and liquors were brought up. The lights in Delmonico's had been turned low and the hush of a weary night hung over the place, broken occasionally by the dull intonation of some one reading off and checking a list of stocks. In there among the captains. Not once was Beardsleigh asked for; not once was his opinion requested. He might have been a block of wood, so far as he counted in the game.

At three o'clock he still waited. At half past three, someone came out for a breath of fresh air and casually remarked to Beardsleigh that the Pocahontas securities had not attracted much favor. He talked lightly as if the Pocahontas was but a drop in the bucket.

"Pretty poor stuff," said the men. "Oughtn't to get tied up with that sort of junk on your hands."

"I know it, I know it," whined Beardsleigh, "but

what's Hunniwell going to do? It's up to him. Hunni—"

"He's busy with bigger things right now. He'll drop twenty million before this situation's over, and he's working hard in there to save his precious hide. Remember, he's got other things to think about besides Pocahontas. His whole string's in danger." He turned on his heel and walked curtly back through the door.

Beardsleigh lit a cigar and tried to smile. The other directors sat stolidly waiting, however, and in a few moments he himself lapsed into a stoney motionlessness. The clock ticked away for another half hour, relieving by its regular insistency the droning hum of voices behind the door. At a little after four, just as he had about given up the vigil and had half raised himself to depart, the door was partly opened for a moment, accidentally.

He could see Hunniwell's flushed face. "They've got the old man in a corner, all right, to judge from the way he looks," thought Beardsleigh.

Just then his own name was mentioned by some one around the long table. Beardsleigh could hear it distinctly.

"How about Beardsleigh?" It was said in a sneering, taunting tone full of the speaker's bitterness against Hunniwell.

Hunniwell glared heavily and roared:

"To hell with Beardsleigh! Listen to my main proposition, will you?"

At that instant the door was banked shut. In a few minutes, a messenger came out and told the waiting man that he need stay no longer.

"Who says so?" asked the president of the Pocahontas, in a flat, incredulous voice.

"Mr. Hunniwell."

How he got home he could not recall, did not care. His brain was too tired to think of possibilities, and he even went so far as to feel that he did not care what happened to the Pocahontas. He thought of Hunniwell with a sneer.

He recalled Ballue with acquiescence instead of horror. He thought next of the fists against the varnished panels; of young Brown who had reviled him to his face; of the widow's voice, shrieking for her money. He went to a glass and viewed his full figure there. The scarf that had always been neatly tucked in was smeared over his crumpled waistcoat; the mustaches that had always been neatly waxed were torn and chewed; his hair was dishevelled; his face filled with hard, sardonic lines, his shoulders bent, and his eyes—What had happened to his eyes? He saw a look there that had never been in them before. He peered more closely. The whites showed clear around the pupils. God! He looked as if he were dead—half dead—dying! Jaded, haggard, battered, worn! All these

things meant much to Beardsleigh. He gauged himself always by the surface; his looks struck inward and affected his soul. Around his mouth there crept a last smirk as he remembered his soul, the soul that Hunniwell had bought, the blank soul that Hunniwell could sign his name to and cash it. Again he recalled Ballue. This time surprised at his own equanimity. Ballue had been a dilettante, also; but he must have been a calm one clear to the end. Next he considered his wife, but with a ghastly shrug of his shoulders. She was out of town and had not heard as yet. What would his wife say? The smirk curled more deeply over his lip.

For an hour thus in the grey light he went over detail after detail, recalling every tiny incident of the affair. How worn the whole world seemed! How sickly, how morbid, how colorless, how apathetic at that hour! It was as if his entire life had been a stale debauch and now lay pale and drawn and wretched at the end of things. All his pomp and tinsel seemed at last a brittle, garish, impalpable, artificial show of colored dolls. He sighed and reached out his hand. It touched a last edition of a morning newspaper, the first newspaper of that day. Then an odd thing happened. This, remember, is the story of one Tin God, of one who did all along what somebody told him to

do—who did what was expected of him—who, when the time came, could do nothing else.

He read two enormous headlines and stopped suddenly at the third. In curt words he saw his name mentioned as one who would probably be arrested on the next day if his bank closed. Again he thought of Ballue. He patted his head a moment indecisively and adjusted his scarf with precision.

It happened in the little tiled bathroom at day-break.

ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN

THERE is one wonderful spectacle at Christmas-time, more wonderful than any other spectacle we may see on earth; and that is the spectacle of a whole world asking for something. Millions upon millions of us, with each his own desire, asking that it be fulfilled. Asking with greedy eyes; or asking out of sad hearts hopefully. Asking aloud with cheery voices; or asking in silence . . . a wish born under cover and kept on the hidden, under side of things. See the great spectacle of millions on their knees before the giving God, petitioning devoutly for something . . . a new doll, a man's life, a bit of meat to eat. And the Christmas angel, who does the bidding of the giving God, disposes as God disposes.

Little Tom had not always been blind. He could remember vaguely a dream-time in his life when the glory and mystery of color had appeared before his eyes. Then the darkness came; and he was left only with those memories. What was color? What made it? For hours he used to sit, generally in corners out of the way of his mother's hurrying feet, and he used to muse upon what he had once seen. Red, Green, Blue—what were they?

He was a quiet little tad. And of course he did a great deal of subdued talking and singing to himself. He liked to make up songs, and the one he made up about the colors was his favorite; he would croon it over and over:

Red is Barns,
And Blue is Skies,
And Green is Grass,
If you've got eyes.

Hour after hour he would sit thus, nodding his head, beating his toy blocks together with his thin, delicate hands. When his mother knelt down and patted his close-cropped blond hair, Tom would catch her face suddenly and kiss her soft cheek. To him the feel of his mother's cheek and neck was the greatest delight in the physical world; for the rest, he lived in a dream-filled world of his own. He never cried, he never complained—but then, he never laughed either.

He was such a sober, determined mite that everybody unconsciously took him very seriously. They had no idea what his life might be behind that dark wall; but that at times it was eery, weird, and piercingly vivid they could gather from the amazing remarks he made. People felt that his existence must teem with supernatural things within the gloom of his little skull. And this was true.

He had a fashion of inventing angels for those senses which remained to him—Angels of Perfume,

Angels of Sound; the Angels of the Tongue, the Sensitive Angels of the Finger-tips. When he played his music-box, Tom thought, "Now these are Angels of Sound bringing me a tune, each one flying with a note to my ear."

Because he could not move about, he had to invent his own play-world; and it was a queer world, like the world of myth. Great creatures rode and fought in his sunless skies. Distorted, monstrous shapes were beaten back onto far horizons by airy, fantastic, happy figures. He knew many by name; he had his champions and his heroes. A ball used to roll across his eyes from left to right. This ball would change itself into a great giant friend of his, then change again into a ball and roll back across his vision from right to left. Secrets were forever being whispered into his ears by all sorts of creatures, always with the caution that Tom should never tell. And Tom, nodding silently and gravely, would hear by the hour the stories the Angels of Perfume breathed to him about the flowers, or some other angel about some other world.

His choicest secrets he never told, even to his mother. Not that he was sensitive, afraid of being laughed at or misunderstood. Not that at all. It was simply that what he knew seemed to him incommunicable; it was impossible for him to translate the thought of angels into the thought of men.

To his father's eyes and his mother's, moist at

times with sudden tears, Tom seemed just a quiet, delicate, kind child, feeling his way along the wainscoting to his favorite corner, sitting amidst his building blocks and musical toys, conversing in a monotone to himself, crooning his own songs:

Red is Barns,
And Blue is Skies,
And Green is Grass,
If you've got eyes.

For months the boy had had a hope in his heart, a hope which had taken the form of a prayer. Each night before he fell asleep he rehearsed this prayer on his pillow; and after he fell asleep he dreamed in anguish of the night when he should make the test of it. In the dream he saw the Christmas wreaths hanging by the fireplace, he saw the empty fireplace itself; he saw his own figure kneeling before it, his hands outstretched; he saw his own lips move in repetition of his prayer. . . . And then, invariably, he fell into a sound sleep and dreamed no more.

What the answer to his prayer was remained a mystery; yet night after night he rehearsed it, month after month he waited patiently, silently, even devoutly for the time.

How he had come by this idea was astonishing; it was so simple he wondered he had not thought of it in the years gone by. . . . A careless remark of

his father's . . . "Certainly, Tom. Anything you ask Santa Claus for you are sure to get."

That faith had burnt in his head like a fever ever since. And so the months rolled by, and mysterious, unearthly, bewitching came Christmas eve. The blind boy lay in his trundle-bed, staring into the shadows of his brain. His little fists were clenched, his little body unconsciously rigid in an ecstasy of longing. Over and over in his mind his prayer, like a wail repeated itself.

His mother pleaded with him softly: he would not sleep. Hour after hour the Angels of Sound brought from the great hall-clock the news of the approach of midnight . . . a midnight of terror to little Tom.

At last Tom called his father. "What time was that?"

"Eleven-thirty," was the answer.

"Lift me out of bed," he said simply. "I—I want to pray. I want to pray to Santy Claus. He comes down the chimney. Take me in where the fireplace is, and leave me all alone."

And the father, humoring the curious child, wrapped him up in a bath-robe and did as he was told.

Then when Tom was alone and had knelt down to pray, Tom's father and mother knelt down outside the door to listen; for they wanted to get him whatever he asked of Santa Claus. But when they

heard what he prayed for, they cried in each other's arms and went away into another room, so that Tom was left all alone by the fireplace, and they never knew of his great adventure with the Angel of Christmas.

And this was Tom's prayer:

O Santy Claus, Santy Claus, you give everything at Christmas, they say! All a boy has to do is to ask you for what he wants—you always give it to him! O Santy Claus, I don't want toys; I don't want anything that costs anything at all! I just want one little tiny thing, Santy Claus. It will be so easy for you to give it to me—just one little tiny thing. . . . Give me back my eyes again, Santy Claus! . . . Give me back my eyes!

Fervently, passionately he prayed. Shaking with sobs, he prayed over and over again his simple prayer, his head bowed, his thin little hands clasped in front of him. All the yearning of a human soul toward the light, all the strength of the spirit of a little child thrilled in his low voice. . . .

I don't want toys; I don't want anything that costs anything at all. Oh, how I want to see! If only to see my mother's face and nothing else on all the earth! It will be so easy for you, Santy Claus! O Santy Claus, give me back my eyes again!

In his dark mind, so used to phantoms, Tom saw his old dream rising. As if aloof, above it all, he saw the picture of himself kneeling, arms upstretched, his dead eyes consciously seeking the

fireplace. The minutes passed. He prayed on and on.

Then midnight came.

From the chimes of the big hall-clock, one by one the Angels of Sound brought Tom the tidings. Each seemed to the boy to be pushing him nearer and nearer to that darkness which had always closed his dreams. What would come? Would nothing come?

The last tones of the clock died away, hesitating lovingly in the quiet air, and then . . . the miracle dawned.

It was merely a blurred radiance at first, but Tom could see it. The blind boy could see. There, on the hearth, a dull shining light became a bright shining light, the light fell into long folds, the folds became wings. A great angel body loomed before him; poised on magnificent shoulders, a glorious angel head. The face had a sublime kindness upon it, an inscrutable heavenly pleasantness in its smile. It so surpassed in grandeur all the dream-angels of Tom's that Tom was at first stricken speechless with terror.

Finally he stammered at that tremendous vision. "B-but you are not Santy Claus . . . are you? I prayed to Santy Claus, and you—you know, Santy Claus is a little fat man in a red jacket—that is, isn't he?"

The sweetest voice Tom ever heard, a voice like

a heavenly violin softly played, answered him gently: "I am your Santa Claus, so do not be afraid."

Tom clapped his hands. "And you will give me back my eyes!" he cried. "You have already given them to me, because—"

"Why do you think I have given you sight?" asked the angel.

"Because I can see you."

"Yes," said the angel, "you see me. You will always be able to see me when you want me. But that is not the gift of sight as you mean it." Raising its voice so that to Tom it sounded like the rolling music of some gigantic organ, the angel said: "I cannot give you the gift of ordinary sight—such sight as the people in the streets have. That sight is of little use; they employ it carelessly. They use it as animals use it—to watch their friends and their enemies. It means nothing to them. It is a convenience, that is all. Really, they do not *see* anything with it.

"They see but the surface with their sight. But I am here to give to you insight worth more than a million animal eyes. You shall see into the hearts of men. Because you are blind, their surfaces shall be nothing to you. They shall not impede you. They shall not lie to you. Do not be disappointed in your prayer; you have the greatest gift of all. . . . You shall see into the hearts of men."

"I shall see into the hearts of men?" Tom asked in amazement.

"And that will allow you to conquer yourself; that will prevent you from being unjust to any man; that will make you merciful to everyone that lives."

"Can I see into my mother's heart?" Tom shouted. "Can I see into my father's? When can I begin?"

"This very night; and you shall tell me what you saw."

"How'll I find you again?"

"Just wish me in your own heart," replied the angel. "I will be there."

Now Tom's father had always seemed to Tom a big jovial man who came home evenings with a cheery laugh, called out, "Hello, Nipper!" or "Hello, prize-fighter!" or "Hello, pirate!" to him, pinched his cheek, laughed with him, danced him on his knee, and kept boisterously at such pranks until bedtime. Tom, of course, loved him. But in his keen, blind child's world Tom could not help thinking of his father as a rather gross man, thick-skinned, too insensible. Tom thought his father ought to feel more sorrow that his boy was blind. Tom did not know that it was on purpose his father rollicked so; it was on purpose that he kept up his pranks and his laughing; it was on purpose he held

back his sadness in order to save Tom's mother from suffering.

That is, Tom *had* not known it. But as he came out from his room of prayer and turned his eyes towards his father, he saw such a sight that he gasped and fell back against the door.

"What's the matter?" cried his father in alarm.

"Nothing; I—I guess I stumbled," evaded Tom.

But this is what Tom saw in his father's heart: a little bowed, wrinkled old man, bending almost double with the weight of an enormous number of bags upon his back. The bags were of all sizes, large and small. He was panting hard with the struggle to carry them; yet, as Tom looked at him, he turned his face to the child and smiled. There was something so brave, so valiant, so superhuman in his smile that a lump came into Tom's throat.

Then ghost-voices passed between Tom and the shriveled old man; and they bore this conversation which human ears could not hear:

"Are you really my father?"

"Yes."

"What makes you carry all those sacks?"

"Because I want to."

"What is in them?"

"Sacrifices."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, responsibilities, duties, obligations."

"Did you always carry them?"

"No. First when the angels gave me your mother. Then when the angels gave me you."

"They are heavy, and they weigh you down. They make you old, and shriveled, and bent before your time. They make your work hundreds of times as hard. Yet you smile as you carry those sacks. . . . Why?"

"Because they are sacrifices for the ones I love."

And with his wonderful smile the bowed man kept gazing lovingly at Tom until Tom's eyes filled with tears and he turned away. He dared not look longer upon that burden of sacks for fear he should begin sobbing, burst out, and reveal something of his secret. He knew now what the Angel of Christmas had given him; and it made him exceedingly sad.

Then Tom turned towards his mother.

Another strange picture he saw. He saw a young woman standing half-way up the slope of a steep hill. In each of her hands she had a heavy weight, but she would not drop these. About each ankle was strapped a heavy weight. On her back were all the sacks she could possibly bear. She seemed so weary that Tom did not see how she would be able to continue; yet, when he looked at her, she turned her face toward him and smiled. It was a smile as inscrutable as the one he had seen on the face of the angel.

Then the ghost-voices passed between Tom and his mother.

"Are you really my mother?"

"Yes, dear."

"What are those weights in your hands and on your ankles?"

"They are drudgeries."

"Why don't you drop them?"

"Because of you and your father."

"Look at the millions of tiny sacks upon your back! What are they? Father didn't have nearly so many."

"But his were just as heavy"—she smiled. "These are the numberless little sacrifices that only a woman knows about."

"Did you always have them?"

"They came when love came. They are sacrifices for the ones I love . . . for you, Tom, and your father."

Then the real Tom spoke to his real mother. "Mother," he said, "it is Christmas morning. I wish you would bundle me up and take me down on the front step, so I can see the Christmas crowds go by."

She humored him. "*See* them go by, Tom?" She turned to her husband; and Tom's father saw the tears start into her eyes. "All right, Tom," she said in a choked voice, "you and I will go down and look at the crowds. Give me a couple of steam-

er rugs, Daddy, till I take this night-owl downstairs."

Then they put his new fur boots on him, and his new fur coat, and a great Scotch muffler, and the steamer-rugs; and he and his mother went down to the street where the late Christmas crowds surged by.

"Why are you so still?" asked his mother after a while.

"I am looking at the people," he answered.

"What do you see, Tom?"

"I can't tell you, Momsey."

But he saw a great quicksand, with people sinking desperately all around; yet each had set jaws and the stamp of bravery on his face. And each was heavily laden.

Tom sat in the night and watched that quicksand. On every side he saw the same thing; from the meanest to the highest, struggling somehow, the people rose and fell under their burdens. Out through the immensity of shade beyond there were dim forms he could not distinguish. Yet he knew them to be engaged just as were those whom he had seen.

"Take me back up in the fireplace room, Momsey," he said at last. "And leave me there awhile."

"But it's one o'clock, Tom dear."

"I couldn't sleep now anyway. I've got something I want to say to—to Santy Claus."

Again in the room alone he prayed to the angel. And the angel appeared.

"What?" asked the angel in a low voice.

"Oh," whispered Tom, "it is a terrible gift you have given me! Yet it's a wonderfully sweet kind thing."

The strong wise angel lowered its eyes to the trembling, awestricken figure of the boy. "What did you see?"

"Oh!" cried the boy. "Everywhere— everywhere—I saw people—all the people—the worst as well as the best—weighed down with great heavy weights so that their work was hard, sacrificing themselves for the people that they love. I saw the good and the bad."

"Well, and what did you think of it all?"

"Somehow it was all good."

"That," said the angel, bowing its head and speaking in a voice like a violin softly played, "that is how God sees it too."

A BOOK IN A RUNNING BROOK

HE let the lid of his trunk down softly, turned the key, put it in his pocket, sighed, and sat down by the open window. Ten o'clock of a June night. The moon, like the shoulder of a goddess, stood refulgent in the sky, shimmering in pale sorcery over the soft and odorous land. June. His last June there. The boy leaned out of the window, and sucked the aromatic air deep into his clean lungs. Mysterious and fresh, the moonlight swam up to him, around him, over him; its cool glory fascinated him. In the tense silence of the country at that hour he thought of himself as the only living thing under that moon to yield itself to her magic. In the house he alone remained awake, anxious and troubled at his decision to go. The murmur of his thoughts fantastically seemed to fall in with the rhythmic murmur of the studious dark.

His brain gave itself up to the first vertigos of young ambition. He thought cravingly of his chances in the big city, the steel and stone city of skyscrapers to the south, the city of opportunity. Little golden details dazzled his mind. Imagination widened his eyes. He saw far away over trees and rivers and farmhouses, dozing under the

moon, to where the smoke curled and the ferry-boats whistled and the subway shrieked. And he was to go. To-morrow. He looked down gravely at his trunk. Yes, he was to go.

It was impossible for him to sleep. He kept thinking of himself soberly as some other, some detached person about to start on a long irrevocable journey, some other man about to sail dauntlessly into dangerous gulfs; yet of a sudden a warmth of energy, of ambition, would fuse him with this other man. With a brave bound of the heart they would go out through the night together.

He looked back at his life in this little town; safe enough, sturdy enough. Yet not wide enough, not fast enough. Where was his career? His career had been lost here in the little needless things which every new day found for him to do. Now the time had come that he must go out of it all, to the bigger work.

Then he thought of her . . . of the pain it would cause her to have him leave, of the hurt that would stir in her heart all those two years. (He had decided that in two years he would be able to come back for her.) But during that time? What would be her anguish? What would she do? Would they both change? And would misery follow the change? The phantom of a possible woe settled in his heart even then as he sat in the old room. How could he go and leave her? And yet he felt he must.

First, however, he went out of the house—up the old lilac-hedged road, past drowsing gardens of pompous hollyhocks, white little cottages moored to the planet's bosom by fragrant vines, hushed farmyards smelling freshly, patches of maples dripping quietly with dew, locked stables, scent-swinging orchards. And, over all, that magic moon brooded, luring the earth up to her, closer and closer, as if to make it forget itself that night, and become, like her, full of a fairy softness.

He took his cap from his head, thrust it into the pocket of his flannel coat, and walked bare-headed down the old hill—their hill—to the brook—their brook—and down the brook's plushy bank to their spot.

There was a ford there at that spot, where the brook, a garrulous old character, narrated mysteries to a colony of old, smooth brown stones, some flat, some round, some large, some small. And there was a lounging place there, in the roots of a great-chested oak who shook his crest to the moon a hundred feet above. In the lounging place it was shadow, deep and uncommunicative; but, across the brook and below the ford, where the velvet waters stole in a circle back under willow and marsh grass, there was another sort of shadow—light as a veil, giving open now and then to make rifts for the moon, when the breeze through the

leaves fretted the surface of the stream. In there, under the willows, after the brook had done chattering with the ford pebbles, it was accustomed to move more gravely and speak of sweeter, deeper things. This had been its habit, especially upon moonlight nights, for something over a thousand years, they say.

In the lounging place the boy lay down, prone on his face in the soft grass for a time, letting thoughts of his future go swirling through his head. What people he would meet in the big city! Where would he live? What would he see? But, by and bye, as these thoughts died away, his ears began to note the staunch little voices of the grass . . . the click and hum of the thriving insects, the burr and whistle of beetle and cricket; then, ranging wider, his ears caught the sonorous drone of the great woodland at his back; the rustling that came leaping through the leaves on the trail of every breeze, trying to catch up with the head of the wind; the dancing chatter of the brook to the colony of old brown stones; and, at length, its more subdued and sentimental murmur beneath the clump of murmuring willow trees on the opposite bank.

Then slowly the boy forgot to take note of these sounds. For he was in love, and it was June.

He raised his head out of the grass and stared straight before him, abstracted, dreaming of her,

of himself, and their love together in this old lounging-place. And as he stared, the moon poured her magic and performed her miracle. For, beyond the ford, a gentle slope ran up straight to the moon's shoulder, where she showed it over the hill. And down this slope she stretched her bare, white arm, slowly, smoothly, until her hand reached the brook, just at the ford. And there her hand broke out into a thousand fingers, diaphanous digits which played over every ripple and every stone as if to strike soft music from the stream. But one finger alone shone with a brighter glory than all the rest. Seemingly it wore a gem. It lay across the biggest old brown stone and there it glimmered, glimmered, glimmered bewitchingly.

The young fellow in the lounging place had let his sight roam carelessly down the moon's arm to the brook. And there suddenly he saw this brightest finger. He fixed his eyes upon it as if fascinated. The more it shimmered and beckoned the more steadfastly he locked his eyes upon it. In this fashion, too, did the poets of old. As he looked at the moon's finger he seemed gradually, gently to care less about his own thoughts and to care more about fairy things—such as what the secrets in the grasses were, and what made the old oak's heart to beat, and what on earth the brook could find to talk about for over a thousand years. Then, as his mind wan-

dered, he began to catch murmurs of a story going on over there under the willows, where the waters spoke gravely of sweeter, deeper things. And, as he listened, this story seemed somehow to have something to do with him himself; so, with his eyes still fixed on the moon's finger, he leaned closer and heard it all. In this fashion, too, did the poets of old.

What Went On Under the Willows.

"Her name was Alice . . . let me see, that was over a hundred years ago. It's been a story in these willows here from slip to slip and root to root a long time back. She lived in an old white house over the hill there. It's gone now. She must have been pretty—"

"She was pretty," ran the brook. "She could bend and she could droop her waist and her neck just as gracefully as you do—almost. Of course, these human beings cannot be as pretty as we are. But Alice *was* pretty. Yes, indeed. I should say she had hair that was as fine and rich and glossy as any grass I ever saw. And her lips were as red as the berries on that red haw behind the oak; and her teeth were as white as the foam of me off those rocks in the springtime when I'm frothy; and she had a voice like the meadowlark's that sings in the field over yonder. And her skin—well, it was *almost* as pretty as apple blossoms. And her foot! Maybe a leaf on

the ground could be lighter, but I doubt it. A wonderful girl. Wonderful enough to belong to us."

"She does belong to us now," soughed an old willow.

"Earth's flowers are maiden's eyes," croaked the old frog.

"Yes," sighed the brook; then murmured on, "but you must remember, whereas you mourn and grow old, I am always young and have an eye for youth. Now, I say Rose is another Alice."

At the sound of the name of Rose the boy in the lounging place stirred slightly.

"Rose and Alice," went on the liquid voice among the shadows. "I don't know which is the prettier."

"Why, Rose I should think," said a young willow. "I've seen her down here with that lad Welton. She reminds me of the bluebird that comes in the morning and bathes in among those rocks."

"Alice was just as pretty as Rose," murmured the brook. Then its words slid off, indistinguishable, in the rustling air for a few moments. At last it broke out: "I only hope she won't be as unhappy."

The young willow drooped its silky ears to the stream. "Was Alice unhappy?" it asked.

"She was never seen again," said an old willow and fetched a somber sigh.

"All because of her lad," lamented the brook. "He had ambition."

"Break hearts . . . to make marts," quoth the frog.

And the brook said: "I remember him well. His legs sprang under him like saplings and his breast swelled like a tree in a gale. His eyes were like a hound's and his hair as curly and crinkly as cresses. They used to come—a hundred years ago it was—and sit beneath that old oak. Just as Rose and Welton do to-day. Ah, I am always young and I note these delicious things. But he had an ambition. I think he went off toward the setting sun and left her here. The lads had such ideas in those days. Always toward the setting sun. Some of them came back soon. Some never came back."

"While they seek afar, their greatest empire is under their hand," the frog broke in.

"How so, Oracle Belly?"

"Let them look. Its map is in their palm."

The brook ran on: "But Alice's lad came back. Yes. Yes, he came back. It was two springs, I think, that he was gone. There used to be a young wind hereabouts that told the story. A most prying, inquisitive little wind he was, but he had, after all, I think, a sweet inten-

tion about him. He was merry and jolly, but he had his dreamy qualities, too. I rather liked him."

"Is it the wind that comes sneaking up on my back from the wheat in midsummer?" asked the young willow.

"No; this wind is gone now. He brought us hay smells from a valley over yonder. But the valley is all filled in now; so he doesn't come any more."

"Alice was gone when her lad came back," sighed the old willow. "Nobody knew where. The lad couldn't find out. It was this wind that came and told us, here in the shadows. 'Twas dusk of a summer day, wasn't it?"

"Midsummer," murmured the brook, gently. "This wind followed the lad down here from the old house. I mind how the lad looked at himself in my pool and then went away, slowly. But the wind, I remember, hung around in the willows here and told us the story. I don't know just how it began. It was all about him and his mother and Alice. Alice, it seemed, had not been one of them, but somehow she had lived in their house over there, ever since she was a tiny girl no bigger than that berry bush. What she did there I don't know, but lad and lass used to come down here and dream and grow and dream and grow—and as they grew I've no doubt their

dreams grew, too. I speak from my own experience; for, believe me or not, even *I* have had ideas of the sea.

"Well—so this wind used to tell—she came at length to fill all that house with perfume and with music. And the suns swung on and the frosts came, and the suns swung on and the frosts came. There were just these two and his mother in that old house, so this wind said. This wind was sentimental: he told me he used to steal into corners of that house and find her fragrance there before him; and he used to bring birds' songs into that house, but her songs drowned them out in sweetness. Well, anyway, when Alice and her lad were quite grown he had this notion—a sturdy notion it was, too, of going away. I know just how he felt. Before I got water enough, I once started out, too, but the sun soon dried me up.

"And—where was I?—and when the lad had gone, so this wind said, he used to pry through the curtains to see her; and tag at her skirts through the meadow to hear her. And she sang no more; but took to sobbing, just like you willows when the cold winds come. Indeed, her voice sounded like that old willow's voice there.

"She went through the rooms of the old house; maybe she would start a song, half forgetful, you know, but then she would quit suddenly.

She would flutter in front of an old mirror there, in one of the dresses that had pleased him most. And then she would lay off the dress and weep over its furbelows. This is like young maids, so the wind said. In the dark of nights she would roam in the old garden, and wring her hands and look with anguished face at the stars as if they could help bring him back; and at such times, in among the crickets the wind would hear her voice, whispering in pain: 'I meant nothing in his life . . . I meant nothing in his life . . . So he went away from me!'

"There was a rosebush there; a deep red rose grew on it and she used to hold this rose's head in her fingers, and kiss it, and tell it how she had hoped to grow old along with him, loving him and helping him all his life. Then the tears would fall and this wind would brush in between the tears and the rose, trying to dry her eyes and comfort her.

"All through the long months of summer she haunted the old paths and the old rooms, sighing how she had meant to be with him all his life, but now he had gone and left her. A desolate sadness day by day crept over her head and heart; and night by night this wind lay under her window and heard her quietly sobbing in the old house. Sometimes she called his name, forlornly, and cried: 'Come back!' Sometimes she

stared down into the garden and murmured between her lips: 'I meant nothing, nothing, nothing in his life. Nobody will understand.'"

"Poor little maid," sighed the old willow.

"And then she went away, this wind told me. He could not follow her out of this valley, though he tried, and got his ears boxed and was thrown back here by the other winds for his pains. But she went away forever; and the last this wind heard of her was her voice sobbing softly."

"What of the lad?" asked the young willow, eagerly.

"What of the bird that flies south?" retorted the brook. "The lad came back, as I told you. When he came, this wind was on the watch. I told you how spry and nosey this wind was; well, he followed the lad through the old house. He heard the lad weeping on his mother's shoulder. There were the words 'Gone . . . forever'; 'Gone . . . forever'; sounding like an echo throughout the place. They say this is regret, and it is like the sun coming back after the flowers have died. A sun still, but all cold; as if the heart in it had ceased burning because there was nothing left on earth to burn for. 'Gone!' said the lad; and 'forever' said his mother, after him. And the wind said they both seemed stricken down. Then, after that, the lad took to wandering through the house, with the wind behind

his shoulder, listening. What did he hear? He heard sobbing from the lad, too; but not like the old willow's voice was this sobbing. It was like the deep mourning of the big oak yonder when the autumn comes and struggles through its leaves."

"Between a T and nothing is all life," rumbled the frog.

"What do you mean, old Croak?"

"Sight's behind, and sigh's before you."

"Well," said the brook, "the lad—so this wind said to me—stopped first in the upper hall and leaned his head against a mirror there, a mirror brighter than my breast in May. And he looked into this glass and murmured a queer thing. He said: 'What of her glass without her?' and peering a long time earnestly, this sad boy passed on. Yes, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Then he went into her old room, where one of her old silk dresses lay, and the wind picked it up for him, ruffled it and smoothed it out slightly for him, put some new rose fragrance into it for him, and watched what he should do. And the lad sank on his knees and kissed the old dress and cried into its folds. Then he fell to petting it and the wind slipped in and out among his fingers, trying to help him. And the lad sobbed and cried as if his heart would break."

"I have felt that way, too, when I thought the

spring should never come," said the young willow. "Something seems almost to break within me from sadness."

"And then," went the sweet voice of the brook, "he fingered all her pretty things—her tiny soft shoes, her pieces of embroidery, the old ribbons from her hair, the books she looked into when she was alone, the pictures she had placed upon the walls. And the wind heard him say, almost to himself, 'And I found out too late. . . . Too late!'"

"Dreams of gold make young hearts old," came from the frog.

"Down into the garden the lad went, this wind following, and he stood by the rosebushes she had planted. For a while he stood and looked at their deep red blossoms. Then he reached out and crushed the thorns of their stems into his hands and cried and said again: 'Too late.' And this wind took the words and spread them over the garden in among the phlox and the verbenas and the mignonette and the prince's feather. And the lad followed the wind on around through the flowers, his hands pressed to his pale forehead, and he sobbed like the oak tree in autumn: 'Too late . . . my God . . . too late.'

"And then it was he came down to me, and crossed, and lay in the grass there and talked to me, while the wind hung about. He said to me:

'You ought to remember her face, you little foolish brook'—I was ages older than he was—'you ought to know how wonderfully sweet she was. How she used to delight in you! How she played along these banks! And now she is gone. Gone forever from you . . . and from me. I thought the world lay out there, little brook, out yonder toward the west. I thought that *any time* I could come back to her. I did not know. I was too young to know that the world was really here . . . with her. I went searching a world and all the time it was behind my back! It was here, with you and this old oak and these willows—'

"Aye, he mentioned the willows," put in the oldest. "That's the tale they tell. We don't get many human tales hereabout, so I remember this the brook has on his tongue."

"Well, he lay there a long, long time, telling me in that deep, sad voice of his what a silly thing this ambition of his had been. 'It would have all been different if I had had Her with me,' I mind his saying. 'With Her, I had the world in the palm of my hand.'"

"I told you so," interrupted the frog.

"'But I went without her. I went too soon. Too soon. And now it is too late. If you could only speak, old brook'—me with my thousand summer tongues!—'and any other man should

come your way to do as I have done, you ought to hold him here long enough to tell him my story and the story of Alice; how she filled my heart so I did not know my heart was full; how in the bursting of my life—because I was young—my heart has come to the bursting also, and her spirit has fled from it; how when I got to the setting sun at last I knew. My world was here behind me. And I knew it. But I came back too late.

“‘Now, roar that in the ears of lovers till the end of time; whisper it to them among their own whisperings, on nights like this, when they sit on your bank and dream; sing it to them in sunny afternoons when they are picking marguerites and poppies; drone it to them when they are dozing in the dusk:

“‘My God, she is gone forever!

“‘Tell them that. And make the word ‘gone’ mean all the sadness of all the Novembers you have ever known. Tell them your waves are made up of my tears and the tears that Alice shed, and that forever over these stones and in these willows they are rolling and telling over and over what happened to us in our youth. There is a tale you may tell and it shall never grow old: the glory man looks for in the skies he holds in the palm of his hand—just once.

“‘Now there is a song that will split the

breasts of men for a million years: 'My God, she is gone forever!'

"Then he lay staring at me from under the tree for hours longer. And at last he got up, like a lame man, and went away. The last I heard him say was, 'Too late . . . too late.' And the wind followed him over the hill into the darkness.

"In late summer the wind came back. It was the last we saw of him and he bore the tags of the story. The old house was deserted, the garden overgrown, the people gone. Like dry seeds that would never sprout; like broken butterflies that would never come to the flowers, the man and his mother were gone." The brook floated down to a whisper, murmuring, "That is the story of Alice and her lad."

Then the old willow groaned and began: "I am the fruit of lamentation, my dress is built for grief, my head is bowed down. I know the silent sadnesses of things since time began; I know the quiet anguish of the brokenhearted. I am here as a memorial to all these things. I feed on mute tears, and the songs sung in my branches are plaintive and low. And I say that in our world we know nothing so grave and awful as what goes on in these human hearts. Ours is a life of patient sweetness, whether we are torn and crushed or whether we rise in this moon-

light air. But those strange beings who walk before us, indeed they rack themselves in a terrible madness; their pangs are most tremendous on earth; their sorrows are deeper than the waters; their joys are loftier than the skies. And so as I bow here, knowing these things, I always pray; pray that they shall all of them have their strange joy and none of them suffer their strange sorrow. I think they do not know this as they walk. I think they conceive I weep because of my own weakness; whereas, instead, I weep because of their weakness. And I pray, with my beard in this stream, because I want them to be happy."

"To be happy they must be wise," intoned the brook, softly. "To be wise they must know when to start and when to stay. Else, like Alice's lad, they will forever go over those hills, sobbing back upon the wind 'Too late . . . too late . . . too . . .'"

A sudden cloud passed subtly over the moon as the brook spoke.

It veiled her shoulder, her arm, her glistening hand. And the face of the water went silently gray, losing its fascination.

At once, too, the eyes of the boy beneath the tree clouded. His lids closed a moment, then opened. He stared vaguely about him, with

a slight shiver. He looked again at the brook. It was silent now, slipping along in the pearly darkness. Quickly he stood up and wiped his forehead. Where was he? He had almost forgotten. Then his hand rested against the old oak tree and he had found himself.

What Went On Under the Apple Tree

Back through the night, bareheaded, he made his way, up the old familiar street filled with its summer incense. At the second house, by the corner of a hedge, he stopped. There was an apple tree there and it cast a soft midnight shadow on the grass. Twice he whistled, low and clear, the note of the quail: Bob-bob-white! Bob-bob-white! And waited. He thought he caught a sound of sobbing somewhere in the shadow.

"Are you there?" he whispered. And Rose came stealing into his arms.

"I—I saw you go down the street and waited here. I—I knew you would come back."

The daze of the moon was still in him.

"How did you know that?" he asked, slowly.

"I-j— just knew it."

"How?" he asked more sharply, in wonder at what had just passed at the brookside.

"Because something strange has been hurting me all evening, and I knew you would come to make the hurt quit . . . I knew you would come before it was too late."

"Before it was . . . too late," he repeated. Then, among his thoughts, he stroked her hair and murmured in her ear:

"Rose, I'm not going."

She never looked up from his arm. "Oh-h-h," was all she said; yet the sigh seemed to let out a hope that had been taut in her soul for days.

He clenched his jaws. "No, I'm not. I'll stay here another year."

"B-but your career? In the city there's so much more chance, you know you said."

"I—yes, I know." He passed his hand over his eyes. "I know I said that. But I—I'm not in so much of a hurry." He caught his breath and then plunged rapidly and confusedly ahead: "Rose, you do mean something in my life. You mean the greatest thing there is. And I'm not going to go away and let your heart break and have you sobbing day and night around the garden and your rooms and the willows and the brook . . . and calling to me to come back. I'm not going to come back and find I am too late and that you've gone off through the meadow somewhere with nothing but the wind to follow you and hear you crying your heart out. My career begins here. It's right here. It's you!"

She looked at him with wide eyes through

the dark, and her voice thrilled huskily as she asked: "What do you mean?"

"Let's take the old Porter house. It's not too large. Only five rooms downstairs and three up. I didn't know it till to-night but I've always wanted to live in that old house—with you. It's a hundred and twenty years old but——"

"I love old things! And that dear old fireplace in that dear old dining room, Will! The furniture and the paneling must be all in white, and the rugs blue. Just like Delft china."

"And we'll have roaring big logs going every night during the winter; and big easy chairs. And I'll have a dog—a hunting dog with big brown eyes."

"And it won't take me any time to fix up that old garden at the back by the stone wall. It's just overgrown and needs a little weeding. It's just full of old-fashioned flowers! Roses and phlox and verbenas and mignonette and bachelors' buttons and prince's feather."

"We'll 'restore' it, Rose. Just as it was. Andirons and crane and rag carpet. And I'll buy a horse and we'll drive around the country rousting out good old furniture. There's attics I know of that will make it look like 1776 and General George Washington come to stay over night!"

"And my sewing room will be one of those cunning dormer rooms upstairs."

"And we'll have cider and apples in the cellar."

"And I'll have the chickens. I can make more out of chickens than you think. I put fourteen eggs under one of our hens here and she brought out every one of them!"

"All right. And it isn't too late to lay out a good big vegetable garden. That patch between the orchard and the barn. I'll have old Sam Westlin plow it up to-morrow."

"You like salads. Be sure to have plenty of lettuce; and some endives; and mother will give us some tomato plants. *Will!*" The girl gave a gasp at the boldness of her own thought.

"What?"

"Do you suppose we could ever own for our own selves that dear old place?"

"Sure," he answered, bravely. "I heard Miss Sally only wants seven hundred dollars for it. And I've got three hundred dollars. I could pay that down and the rest would be just like rent."

"You'll do nothing of the kind! Pay out all your money? How are you going to buy that horse and that furniture? You pay Miss Sally a hundred dollars down. And I can sell vegetables from the garden and can make my chicken-money count toward the rent, as you call it."

"But, Rose, a man can't do that, you know."

"Can't do what?"

"Why, a *man* can't let his—his—his *wife* give him any money to help him out. A man has to go out in the world and make his——"

A hand stole over his mouth, to be later removed and supplanted by a pair of young lips. "Now you've left all that sort of talk behind you, dear. That sort of talk came pretty near getting you away from me and into the city; and you must never, never talk that way again. Because working together is the real way."

Then she began crying gently, her heart full of joy and relief.

And as they stood there, close together, the moon came out from behind her cloud. The veil slipped from her shoulder, her dazzling arm stole over the hedge, and she placed her fingers tenderly on the young girl's head.

